

LATIN *BASILISSAI*
IN PALAIOLOGAN MYSTRAS:
ART AND AGENCY

VOLUME I:

TEXT

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Abstract

This dissertation demonstrates that the presence of Latin *basilissai*, Catholic wives of the Byzantine despots of Morea, in Mystras between 1349, when the city became the seat of the Despotate, and 1460, when it was surrendered to the Turks, had an impact on the artistic and cultural production at court. These foreign women were agents of the ruling political and economic elites of Italian and Frankish courts, and expressed their agency by mediating their specific cultural and artistic traditions into the production of their adopted city.

Art and cultural historical approaches, in which attention is focused on painted and sculpted details, inscriptions, archaeological remains, architectural design, and urban planning, are used to show that the Latin women were historical agents, whose presence can be detected in Mystras. A multidisciplinary analysis of case studies reveals cross-cultural motifs in the artistic production, demonstrating the relationship between pieces of evidence. The production of the workshops of Mystras expressed features that were, in some cases, responses to Constantinopolitan and Byzantine models, while, in others, autonomous and innovative, revealing complex cross-cultural references. Ultimately, this study shows that the particular cultural and artistic landscape of Mystras is indebted to exogenous cultures linked to these women.

For Giulio

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The pursuit of scholarship is always a shared effort. Whether conducted in the solitude of a studio, while in dialogue with the scholarship of the many who preceded us, or shared with a lively community of scholars, scientific research is first and foremost a dialogue.

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I Introduction

I.1 Overview

The Byzantine historian Georgios Sphrantzes, in his *Chronicon*, refers to the wife of a Byzantine despot of Morea as a ‘*βασίλισσα*’ (*basilissa*).¹ In this dissertation, *Latin Basilissai in Palaiologan Mystras: Art and Agency*, I demonstrate that the presence of Catholic wives of the Byzantine despots of Morea between 1349, the year in which Mystras became the seat of the Despotate, and 1460, the year in which the city was surrendered to the Turks, had an impact on artistic and cultural production at court.² Through collection and analysis of written and material evidence, this study adds to the cultural portrait of these women and their historical context. Major historical narratives about the Despotate of Morea and the city of Mystras ignore their presence.³ These foreign women were agents of the ruling political and

¹ Georgios Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, ed. Riccardo Maisano (Roma: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1990), esp. 41 n. 65. In this thesis, for citation and bibliographical standards, I use the guidelines provided by *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Citations in footnotes and bibliography are encoded using *Zotero*, see ‘Zotero’, 2018, <https://www.zotero.org>.

² In this thesis I use the modern toponym “Mystras” for the capital of the Despotate of Morea. In Byzantine sources the city is often referred to as “Μυζηθρᾶς” or “Myzithras”. See Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, 214. See Titos Papamastorakis, ‘Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists’, in *Oi Byzantínes Póλεις (8ος-15ος Αἰώνας)* (Rethymnon, 2012), 277–96.

³ For primary sources on the Peloponnese and interactions with neighbouring polities see, in general, Konstantinos N. Sathas, ed., *Μνημεία Ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας. Documents inédits relatifs à l’histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, vol. I–IX (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1890); Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, vol. IV (Αθήνα: Επιτροπή Εκδόσεως των Καταλοίων Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου, 1923–, 1930); Freddy Thiriet, ed., *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie, t. 1. 1329-1399*, vol. I (Paris, 1958); Freddy Thiriet, ed., *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie t. 2. 1400-1430*, vol. II (Paris, 1959); Freddy Thiriet, ed., *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie t.3. 1431-1463*, vol. III (Paris, 1961); Jean Longnon and Peter W. Topping, *Documents sur le régime des terres dans la principauté de Morée au XIVe siècle*, vol. 9 (Paris: Mouton, 1969); Κωστής Παπακόγκος, *Αρχείο Πέρσον: Κατοχικά ντοκουμέντα του Δ.Ε.Σ. Πελοποννήσου* (Αθήνα: Παπαζήσης, 1977); Γεώργιος Σ. Πλουμίδης, *Αιτήματα και πραγματικότητες των Ελλήνων της Βενετοκρατίας* (Ιωάννινα: Πανεπιστήμιο, 1985); Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*; Julian Chrysostomides, ed., *Monumenta Peloponnesiaca: Documents for the History of the Peloponnese in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995); Andrea Nanetti, *Il fondo archivistico Nani nella Biblioteca nazionale di Grecia ad Atene: euristica documentaria sulla Morea veneta* (Venezia: Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia, 1996); Andrea Nanetti, ed., *Il patto con Geoffroy de Villehardouin per il Peloponneso, 1209* (Roma: Viella, 2009).

economic elites of their states of origin, and expressed their agency by mediating specific cultural and artistic traditions into the production of their adopted city.

Ultimately, this study shows that the particular cultural and artistic landscape of Mystras is indebted to exogenous cultures linked to these women.

During the critical century between 1349 and the end of the Empire in 1453, Mystras aspired to be an imperial capital.⁴ At the core of its geopolitical strategy were diplomatic, inter-faith marriages between members of the imperial dynasties and neighbouring ruling polities.⁵ Inter-faith marriages had an obvious economic and diplomatic value for the imperial court. Latin wives came with financial resources in dowry and served as ambassadors to their courts of origin. By contrast, Western courts saw inter-faith marriages as a way to preserve access to Eastern markets.

These marriages involved, among others, Latin women, such as Isabelle de Lusignan, daughter of Guy de Lusignan, King of Armenia and descendant of the King of Cyprus, who married Manuel Kantakouzenos; Bartholomea Acciaiuoli, daughter of Nerio Acciaiuoli, Duke of Corinth and Athens, who married Theodore I Palaiologos; Cleophe Malatesti, daughter of Malatesta Malatesti Lord of Pesaro and

⁴ David Jacoby, 'Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture', in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1551): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New York, N.Y.: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 20–41, esp. 32; Melita Emmanuel, 'Religious Imagery in Mystra. Donors and Iconographic Programmes', in *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400 - 1453)*, ed. Michael Grünbart (Wien: ÖAW, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 119–28.

⁵ Julian Chrysostomides, 'Italian women in Greece during the late 14th and early 15th centuries', *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi (Miscellanea Pertusi)* 2 (1982): 119–32; Silvia Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 93 (2000): 521–67.

commander of the Venice Republic, who married Theodore II Palaiologos; and Theodora Tocco, who married Constantine XI Palaiologos.⁶

Primary sources do not provide comprehensive historical portraits of the *basilissai*. While part of complex dynastic networks in which they played diplomatic roles, the *basilissai* were peripheral to, or entirely absent from Greek and Latin narratives. Written evidence is insufficient to document their contributions to Mystras' cultural and artistic life. However, when considered collectively as Latin princesses of Catholic origin marrying into the Palaiologan imperial family, and when secondary cultural sources are considered, these women emerge as important cultural agents. History has cast a shadow on their agency, but their faint traces in Mystras, cross-referenced with evidence from their countries of origin, allow us to re-place the *basilissai* into the historical narrative.

My aim is to use art and cultural historical approaches, in which attention is focused on painted and sculpted details, inscriptions, archaeological remains, architectural design, and spatial planning, to show that the Latin women, and elements of the courts they brought with them, were historical agents whose presence can be

⁶ Theodora Tocco is not considered in this study due to the short span of her life as wife of a despot, and the limited amount of time she spent in Mystras. According to Sphrantzes she did not reside in Mystras for very long. On 1 July 1428 she married Constantine Palaiologos, later to become Constantine XI, near Patras, and she died away from Mystras in November 1429. She was temporarily buried in Glarentza and then transferred to Mystras to be buried in what is believed to be the church of Hagia Sophia. See Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XVI.3, 38-9, and XX.9, 68-9. For a recent discussion on the women of the Tocco family, see Dionysios Ch. Stathakopoulos, 'Sister, Widow, Consort, Bride: Four Latin Ladies in Greece (1330–1430)', in *Cross-Cultural Interaction Between Byzantium and the West, 1204-1669: Whose Mediterranean Is It Anyway?*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou (Milton: Routledge, 2018), 236–57, esp. 245-47. Another two women who are briefly associated with Mystras and also not considered in this dissertation are: Caterina Gattilusio, second wife of Constantine Palaiologos, and Caterina Zaccaria, wife of Thomas Palaiologos. The first was wife for less than two years and did not reside in Mystras. See Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XXV.4, 90-1. The second married Thomas in January 1430, but Thomas Palaiologos, who gained the title of despot in 1428 as son of the emperor, was not the actual despot of Morea while Theodore II was alive until 1443. The latter was succeeded by Constantine until 1449.

detected in Mystras. Of course, not all female agency uncovered in the evidence can be directly linked to each of the four wives of the Despots. Thus, to reveal their role in specific artistic and architectural achievements, multiple sources must be considered, relating both to them and to individuals associated with them, inside and outside Mystras.

A multidisciplinary analysis of case studies that reveal cross-cultural motifs in the artistic production demonstrates the relationship between pieces of evidence. My research incorporates evidence from cities in modern Greece, Italy, and Cyprus. The geographical diffusion of the evidence witnesses a climate of Frankish and Italian humanism as well as the breadth of Byzantine culture. The production of the workshops of Mystras expressed features that were, in some cases, responses to Constantinopolitan and Byzantine models, while, in others, autonomous and innovative, revealing complex cross-cultural references.

This research considers materials relating to the *basilissai* as foreign agents. How foreign these women truly appeared to the inhabitants of Mystras is an important question to consider. The written evidence suggests that indeed they were considered as such.⁷ It is therefore important to note that, despite the strong focus on women, my analysis adopts a cultural studies framework, not a gender studies framework.⁸

⁷ See for example the way in which Georgios Gemistos Plethon refers to the Italian origin of Cleophe Malatesti in his funerary oration. See Plethon's monody "ἐπὶ τῇ αὐοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ" in Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, vol. IV (Αθήνα: Επιτροπή Εκδόσεως των Καταλοίπων Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου, 1930), 167 vv. 3-6. See also discussion below in ch. III.5 - Funerary orations, esp. 181

⁸ Studies of gender in Byzantium are quite developed. For reference on the role of women in the Byzantine and Islamic world during the early and middle period, see Liz James, ed., *Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium* (London: Routledge, 1997); Part 1 Gender in Late Antique, Byzantine and Islamic societies, in Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 23-161. For a collection of studies on the Byzantine family, see in general Leslie Brubaker and Shaun

I.2 *Basilissai* and Mystras in context

This thesis analyses the connections and the mutual exchanges between the intellectual and political elites of the Despotate of Morea and those of the Western polities interacting with the Despotate, and shows how they affected the cultural production in Mystras. The argument relies on the historical role of a number of cultural agents. While I do not intend to provide a comprehensive introduction to these figures, many of whom have been extensively studied, it is necessary to place them in context.⁹

From the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth centuries, Italian maritime powers, Venice above all, focused on securing commercial routes through the eastern Mediterranean, while Byzantium strived to remain relevant despite a severely diminished geostrategic role and limited resources.

Tougher, eds., *Approaches to the Byzantine Family* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). For a study of the iconography of the Empress in early Byzantine coinage see Leslie Brubaker and Helen Tobler, 'The Gender of Money: Byzantine Empresses on Coins (324–802)', *Gender & History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 572–594; Kriszta Kotsis, 'Defining Female Authority in Eighth-Century Byzantium: The Numismatic Images of the Empress Irene (797–802)', *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5, no. 1 (2012): 185–215. For the role of women at court, see Henry Maguire, 'Images of the Court', in *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World*, ed. Eva R. Hoffman, vol. 5, 2007, 285–300. On court standards and the participation of women to court life in the late period, see Maria G. Parani, 'Cultural identity and dress: the case of late Byzantine ceremonial costume', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 57 (2007): 95–134; Ruth J. Macrides, Joseph A. Munitiz, and Dimiter Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies*, Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies ; (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), esp. 353, 435–37.

⁹ For a recent survey of the historical and notable individuals present in the Morea, see the Index in Sharon Gerstel, ed., *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), 481–510. On the Palaiologan family in Morea see Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. 'The Early Years of Palaiologan Rule in the Morea (1382–1407)', 235–58 and 'The Final Years of the Byzantine Morea (1407–1460)', 259–84. On the cultural and intellectual production of the court in Mystras see in particular Silvia Ronchey, 'Cronistoria politico-ideologica dello Stato bizantino: da Fozio ai Paleologi', in *Lo Stato Bizantino* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002), 133–38.

In the thirteenth century, trade had become a fundamental component of the European economy.¹⁰ By the fourteenth century though, access to the Eastern markets had deteriorated, and the European economy imploded into a long period of stagnation, hampered by conflict, successive plagues, and, later, the loss of silver production.¹¹ Traditional routes to the East had become unstable, leaving those through Trebizond and Mamluk Alexandria as the only viable ones. Thus, the Peloponnese and Cyprus became of critical interest, particularly to Venetian merchants, as stepping-stones towards the Levant.

The Byzantine world was also transforming. After the fall of Constantinople in 1204, the political landscape fragmented in a number of small states, while the economy lost scale and resources. The loss of Cyprus and Serbia meant the loss of copper and silver mines. The reconstitution of the Byzantine Empire in Constantinople did not reverse this trend.¹² After 1350, population declined, as did manufacturing, which could not compete with Western production, even in traditionally strong luxury goods.¹³ The intersection of these geopolitical and economic forces was evident in the Peloponnese.¹⁴

¹⁰ Douglass Cecil North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World; A New Economic History* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 12.

¹¹ Peter Spufford, 'Trade in Fourteenth-Century Europa', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 155–208, 199.

¹² Angeliki E. Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, UK; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 167–69.

¹³ Laiou and Morrisson, 183.

¹⁴ David Jacoby, 'Rural Exploitation and Market Economy in the Late Medieval Peloponnese', in *Viewing the Morea. Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 213–75.

I.2.a The Peloponnese in context

After the fall of Constantinople in 1204, the Latins appropriated several regions that were once part of the Byzantine Empire.¹⁵ According to Malcolm Barber, their interests in territories extorted from the Byzantines, generically referred as *Romania*, were promoted by papal rhetoric. These went beyond Constantinople and focused mostly on Thessaly, Epiros, Attica, Cyprus and the Peloponnese.¹⁶

Thessaly and Epiros along with several Greek Adriatic islands became part of the Despotate of Epirus.¹⁷ The Epirote State was ruled, between 1318 and 1479, by Italian families by direct appointment and devolution of rights from the Byzantine emperor: the Orsini, who at first controlled the islands of Cephalonia and Zante and then ruled from Arta, were succeeded by the Florentine family of Esau Buondelmonti, and finally by the Neapolitan and Florentine family of the Tocco.¹⁸ Athens and its region, after a period of Catalan domination, fell under the control of the Florentine family of the Acciaiuoli, who also controlled Corinth. Euboea, then known as Negroponte, the Aegean islands and coastal cities such as Patras, Korone, Methone and Nauplion, were under the control or the influence of the Republic of

¹⁵ For studies on the Fourth Crusade and its consequences in the former areas of the Byzantine Empire, see David Jacoby, 'The Encounter of Two Societies: Western Conquerors and Byzantines in the Peloponnesus after the Fourth Crusade', *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (1973): 873–906; John Godfrey, *1204, the Unholy Crusade* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Malcolm Barber, 'Western Attitudes to Frankish Greece in the Thirteenth Century', in *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, 1989, 111–128; Paul Magdalino, 'Between Romaniae: Thessaly and Epirus in the Later Middle Ages', in *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, 1989, 87–110; Gherardo Ortalli, Giorgio Ravagnani, and Peter Schreiner, eds., *Quarta crociata: Venezia, Bisanzio, impero latino*, 2 vols (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2006); Νικόλαος Γ. Μοχονάς, ed., *Η τέταρτη σταυροφορία και ο ελληνικός κόσμος* (Αθήνα: Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών, Ινστιτούτο Βυζαντινών Ερευνών, 2008).

¹⁶ See Barber, 'Western Attitudes to Frankish Greece in the Thirteenth Century', esp. 112–13.

¹⁷ On the Despotate of Epiros, see in general Donald M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros, 1267–1479: A Contribution to the History of Greece in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁸ See Magdalino, 'Between Romaniae: Thessaly and Epirus in the Later Middle Ages', esp. 88–91.

Venice.¹⁹ Cyprus was given to the family of the Lusignan and was under their direct rulership until the island was given to the Republic of Venice in 1489.

From 1205 to 1248, the Franks, led by William I Champlitte (died 1208/9) and Geoffrey I Villehardouin (born 1152 – died 1212/18),²⁰ controlled most of the Byzantine Morea, establishing the Principality of Achaia with its new capital, Andravida, and settlements such as Glarentza and Chlemoutsi (Fig. 1).²¹ The kingdom's greatest expansion occurred during the reign of William II Villehardouin (born 1211/12 – died 1278), who invested significant resources in fortifying the region, including building fortresses in Monembasia, Maina and Mystras, the latter founded in 1249.²² During the Latin occupation of Constantinople and of the western

¹⁹ Secondary literature on the relations between Byzantium and Venice includes Roberto Cessi, *Bizantinismo veneziano* (Venezia: Tipografia del commercio di Marco Visentini, 1961); Ugo Fugagnollo, *Bisanzio e l'Oriente a Venezia*, 1. (Trieste: LINT, 1974); Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Agostino Pertusi, *Saggi Veneto-Bizantini* (Firenze: Olschki, 1990); Χρύσα Α. Μαλτέζου, *Ώψεις της ιστορίας του βενετοκρατούμενου έλληνισμού Αρχαικά τεκμήρια* (Αθήνα: Ίδρυμα Έλληνικού Πολιτισμού, 1993); Marco Pozza and Giorgio Ravegnani, *I trattati con Bisanzio, 992-1198*, vol. 4 (Venezia: Il Cardo, 1993); Giorgio Ravegnani, *Bisanzio e Venezia* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2006); Marino Zorzi et al., *Philanagnōstēs: studi in onore di Marino Zorzi* (Venezia: Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia, 2008); Julian Chrysostomides, *Byzantium and Venice, 1204-1453: Collected Studies*, ed. Michael E. Heslop and Charalambos Dendrinos (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2011). In general, for a study of earlier Byzantine imperial acts to Venice, Pisa and Genoa, see Dafni Penna, *The Byzantine Imperial Acts to Venice, Pisa and Genoa, 10th-12th Centuries: A Comparative Legal Study: Proefschrift* (The Hague: Eleven International Publishing, 2012).

²⁰ The biographical dates of the individuals here presented are taken from Aleksandr P. Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²¹ Secondary literature on the Morea includes William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece (1204-1566)* (London: J. Murray, 1908); Jean Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* (Paris: Payot, 1949); Harold E. Lurier, *Crusaders as Conquerors: The Chronicle of Morea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); Antoine Bon, *La Morée franque; recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1969); Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 177-266; Clare Teresa M. Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea: Historiography in Crusader Greece* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gerstel, *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, 2013; Sharon E. J. Gerstel, 'The Morea', in *Heaven & Earth. Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, ed. Anastasia Drandaki, Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and Anastasia Tourta (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), I, 300-303.

²² On the Franks, the Principality of Achaia and the Villehardouin in Morea, see in general Jean Longnon, *Recherches sur la vie de Geoffroy de Villehardouin, suivies du catalogue des actes des Villehardouin*, (Paris: É. Champion, 1939); Bon, *La Morée franque; recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)*, esp. 'Première Partie -

regions, the Byzantine emperor moved east to Nicaea. Only after William II Villehardouin was captured in the battle of Pelagonia in 1259, did the Byzantines re-appropriate portions of those regions, a process that accelerated when Michael VIII Palaiologos (born 1224/25 – died 1282) re-took Constantinople in 1261.

In the 1262 Treaty of Constantinople, Villehardouin gave the fortresses of Mystras, Maina and Monembasia to the Byzantines as personal ransom, *de facto* ending the Frankish occupation of the Peloponnese, while other regions remained under Latin control.²³ The Peloponnese was a highly strategic area, and the Byzantines valued it enormously, as proven by the progressive focus on regaining different parts of it immediately after the end of Latin Empire, and by the military campaigns up to the fifteenth century.²⁴

Recherches Historiques', 49-298; Jacoby, 'The Encounter of Two Societies'; Jadran Ferluga, 'L'Aristocratie byzantine en morée au temps de la conquête latine', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 4 (1972): 76–87; Dionysios A. Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, 2 vols (London: Variorum, 1975), vol. II, 192-93; Jean Longnon, *Les Compagnons de Villehardouin: recherches sur les Croisés de la quatrième Croisade* (Genève; Paris: Droz; Champion, 1978); Aneta Ilieva, *Frankish Morea (1205-1262) Socio-Cultural Interaction between the Franks and the Local Population* (Αθήνα: Βασιλόπουλος, 1991), esp. 171-90; Nanetti, *Il patto con Geoffroy de Villehardouin per il Peloponneso, 1209*; Filip van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople (1204-1228)* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), esp. 179-225; Nikolaos G. Chrissis, *Crusading in Frankish Greece: A Study of Byzantine-Western Relations and Attitudes, 1204-1282* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

²³ On the contrasts between the Villehardouin and the Byzantine Empire, the feudal system in the region and the system of fortifications see Bon, *La Morée franque; recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)*, esp. 'ch. III - La principauté sous Guillaume II de Villehardouin, Aventures et premiers revers 1255-1278', 117-50; Kevin Andrews, *Castles of the Morea* (Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1953), esp. 159-82; David Jacoby, *La féodalité en Grèce médiévale: les 'Assises de Romanie'; sources, application, et diffusion*. (Paris: Mouton, 1971); Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, esp. 187–355.

²⁴ See Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, esp. vol. I, 13-57; Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, esp. 217-50; Bon, *La Morée franque; recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)*, esp. vol. I, 117-50; Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, esp. 235-58.

The Peloponnese was a varied cultural environment, for the close proximity of diverse polities with 'Latinized' based cultures.²⁵ The Latins had imposed new social standards and political organizations, while allowing cohabitation between the exogenous Catholic ruling class and local Orthodox communities. 'The Peloponnese [...] as well as Attica, Boeotia, and Negroponte, were conquered and subsequently ruled by knights who imposed feudal superstructure on Byzantine society'.²⁶ Even though Greek and Latin elites preserved their distinctive identities, Orthodox and Catholic communities supported the construction of distinct religious establishments and promoted the arts according to different cultural standards and beliefs.²⁷ They coexisted and, while different and never fully integrated, became over time both mutually aware,²⁸ and often in contrast.²⁹ The elites acted as cultural agents, moved by the idea of being part of a larger community where diverse actors acknowledged and referenced each other in the urban centres of the Peloponnese and the rest of the *Romania*.³⁰ This network of commercial and political relations, represented the urban culture within which new foundations like Mystras developed.³¹

²⁵ Elizabeth Jeffreys, 'The Morea through the Prism of the Past', in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 9–21, esp. 11–12.

²⁶ See David Jacoby, 'From Byzantium to Latin Romania: Continuity and Change', in *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean After 1204*, vol. 4, 1989, 1–44, esp. 3.

²⁷ For a recent study on the coexistence of Orthodox and Catholic communities in the regions controlled by the Franks and the Catalans, see Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Monumental Art in the Lordship of Athens and Thebes under Frankish and Catalan Rule (1212–1388): Latin and Greek Patronage', in *A Companion to Latin Greece*, ed. Tsougarakis I. Nickiphoros and Peter Lock (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 369–417.

²⁸ See Ilieva, *Frankish Morea (1205–1262) Socio-Cultural Interaction between the Franks and the Local Population*; Page, *Being Byzantine*; Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea*; Sharon E. J. Gerstel, 'Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea', in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2001), 263–85.

²⁹ For the contrasts between the two groups in the fourteenth century see Page, *Being Byzantine*, esp. 157–70.

³⁰ Relevant case studies of the interactions between Latins and Greeks in medieval Morea are presented in Gerstel, 'Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea'.

³¹ On the economy of the Peloponnese and its relationship to the social and political life of the Despotate of Morea, see Klaus-Peter Matschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries', in *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection,

The cultural production that flourished in these regions between the thirteenth and fifteenth century responded to this socio-political complexity. The literary and manuscript production mirrors the ‘ragged history’ of its major urban centres and the nature of their ruling elites.³² The case study of the *Chronicle of Morea* is exemplary.³³ Its Greek, French, Italian and Spanish versions speak of the ‘Greco-Latin acculturation’ of these regions.³⁴

I.2.b The development of Mystras in context

From the early thirteenth to the nineteenth century, Mystras was one of the most important centres of the Morea (Fig. 1). From the city’s palace and fortress, Frankish princes, Byzantines, Ottomans, Venetians, and again Ottomans, succeeded each other in controlling the territories of what are now the Greek regional units of Arcadia, Argolis, Corinthia, Lakonia, Messenia, Achaea and Elis in the Peloponnese, as well as the regional unit of Aetolia-Acarnania in western Greece.

Although its development was partly organic, it was a Byzantine city of new foundation, the only one planned in its main components — administrative, defensive, economic and religious — entirely *ex novo* under Byzantine authorities, functional to the geopolitics faced by the empire in the region during the thirteenth-

2002), 771–806; Jacoby, ‘Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture’; Jacoby, ‘Rural Exploitation and Market Economy in the Late Medieval Peloponnese’; David Jacoby, ‘The Economy of Latin Greece’, in *A Companion to Latin Greece*, ed. Nickiphoros I. Tsougarakis and Peter Lock (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 185–216.

³² For a survey on the Peloponnesian literary culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, see Jeffreys, ‘The Morea through the Prism of the Past’, esp. 14–21.

³³ On the *Chronicle of Morea* and its counterpart text, the *War of Troy*, and the Frankish Moreote society where they were produced, see Jeffreys, esp. 15–6. See also Page, *Being Byzantine*, esp. 209–41. For a recent introduction to the *Chronicles of Morea* see Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea*, esp. 1–30.

³⁴ See Magdalino, ‘Between Romaniae: Thessaly and Epirus in the Later Middle Ages’, 90.

fourteenth century.³⁵ The ruling and religious elites, supporting its foundation and development, were responsive to imperial Constantinopolitan standards, but were also aware of Frankish and Crusader trends, of Western attributes and even of the presence of regional antiquity.³⁶

It was a capital city in intention – it had a palace, a metropolitan church, rich monasteries, a defensive apparatus, diplomatic, administrative, and commercial infrastructure – and yet it was a relatively small settlement compared to cities such as Thessaloniki or Constantinople, where the imperial court had resided. It was an important religious site. From the earliest phases of its urban development, the city hosted a number of monastic communities, and from the late thirteenth century it became the seat of the bishopric of Lakedaimonia with important institutional ties to the Constantinopolitan patriarchate.³⁷

The development of Mystras as a capital was not immediate. The canvas on which the wives of the Despots acted as historical agents is how Mystras came to be a capital, amidst a number of ports of regional significance in the Peloponnese, and the

³⁵ See Charalambos Bouras, 'Byzantine Cities in Greece', in *Heaven and Earth: Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece*, ed. Jenny Albani and Eugenia Chalkia, II vols (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), II, 45–73, esp. 67.

³⁶ Amy Papalexandrou, 'The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past', in *Viewing of Morea. Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Research Library and Collection, 2013), 23–54; Clare Teresa M. Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea', in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), 419–52. On the role of regional antiquity and the cultural production in Mystras, see below ch. IV.3 - The local antique in the Pantanassa frescoes, 219–242.

³⁷ The connection between Mystras religious communities and the patriarchate is epitomised by the figure of Abbot Pachomios and the Brontocheion monastery, see Sharon E. J. Gerstel, 'Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village. Ecclesiastical and Rural Landscape in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese', in *Viewing of Morea. Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 335–68, esp. 337–48.

relationship it developed with powers operating in the region, and, in particular, with the powerful families of the Palaiologoi and Kantakouzenoi.

After William of Villehardouin ceded the fortress as ransom in 1262, Michael VIII appointed as *kephale*, a local governor for the Peloponnese, a member of the Kantakouzenos family, initially based in Monembasia. Around 1289 the *kephale* moved to Mystras, while in 1285 the system of government changed, shifting from *kephales* nominated once a year, to an *epitropos* with a longer mandate. In 1315 Andronikos II (born 1259/1260 – died in Constantinople 13 February 1332), who ruled as co-emperor with his son Michael IX (born 1277 – died 12 October 1320), appointed Andronikos Palaiologos Asan *epitropos* of Morea. From 1321, the civil war began between Andronikos II, whose son Michael had just died, and his grandson Andronikos III Palaiologos (born 25 March 1297 – died in Constantinople 15 June 1341). It is at this point that John Kantakouzenos began playing a critical role in the elevation of Mystras to the political centre.

John Kantakouzenos (born ca. 1295 – died in Mystras 15 June 1383) was part of an aristocratic family. His father had been appointed by Andronikos II Palaiologos to control the Peloponnese. Thanks to John's wealth and his close relationship with Andronikos III, the Kantakouzenoi influenced the political life of the Empire and of its ruling dynasty from the early twenties to the early eighties of the fourteenth century (Table 1). Not only did John help Andronikos III usurp his grandfather's throne in 1328, supporting him as his *megas domestikos*, but, after Andronikos' death, in 1341 he managed to be crowned John VI Kantakouzenos, co-emperor with Andronikos' son John V (born Didymoteichon 18 June 1332 – died in

Constantinople 16 February 1391).³⁸ A power struggle followed with John V's mother Anna of Savoy (born ca. 1306 – died in Thessalonike ca. 1365) until 1347, when Helena Kantakouzene (born 1333 – died 1396), John VI Kantakouzenos' daughter, was betrothed to and then married John V. This marked the end of the 1341-1347 civil war.³⁹ In 1349, while co-emperor, John VI appointed his son Manuel Kantakouzenos (born ca. 1326 – died in Mystras ca. 1380) as first despot of Morea for life. From this moment on, Mystras was the seat of a Despotate and a new capital.

I.2.c The Despotate and the Latin *Basilissai*

Manuel Kantakouzenos governed the city from 1349 to 1380, maintaining control of the Peloponnese despite a rebellious local aristocracy, and retaining the title of despot despite the opposition of John V Palaiologos.⁴⁰ In an effort to consolidate the Despotate's relations with the powers of the eastern Mediterranean, he married Isabelle de Lusignan (born ca. post 1330 – died Cyprus 1382/7), who was the daughter of Guy de Lusignan, known as King Constantine II of Lesser Armenia (died 1344) and cousin of Hugh IV de Lusignan (born 1293/6 – died 1359).⁴¹ Isabelle lived

³⁸ On John VI Kantakouzenos, see in general Donald M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100-1460; a Genealogical and Prosopographical Study*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 11 (Washington, D.C.: Washington, Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1968); Donald M. Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor: A Biography of John Cantacuzene, Byzantine Emperor and Monk, c. 1295-1383* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁹ Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, 84-89. In 1354 John VI retired to monastic life. See Nicol, esp. 156-58.

⁴⁰ Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos '[i]n 1349 [...] appointed his second son Manuel to take over its [the Peloponnese] administration. Manuel Cantacuzene was only twenty-three years old. [...] Manuel was sent to govern the Peloponnese or the Morea with his capital Mistra. He arrived there on 25 October 1349', in Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, 105-106. On Manuel Kantakouzenos see also Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, esp. vol. I, 94-113; Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100-1460; a Genealogical and Prosopographical Study*, esp. no. 25, 122-28.

⁴¹ The most extensive study on the primary sources related to Isabelle de Lusignan is Dionysios A. Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIV^e siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène', *Revue des Études Grecques* 49, no. 229 (1936): 62-76. See also Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100-1460; a Genealogical and Prosopographical Study*, esp. no. 25, 122-27.

in Mystras until 1380/1383. The Greek chronicles do not provide much information about her, possibly because, as she married a Kantakouzenos, she was the victim of the antagonism between the Palaiologoi, who regained control of the Empire with John V Palaiologos, and Manuel, who managed to keep the title of despot.

She was a powerful figure at court and an important agent in the international relations of the region, as demonstrated by two episodes. First, she participated in the negotiations to organize the marriage of a daughter of John V Palaiologos to Peter II de Lusignan (born 1354/7 – died 1382), son of Peter I King of Cyprus (born 1328 – died 1369). Second, she acted as intermediary between the Lusignan family and the emperor of Byzantium to help her cousin, Leo V of Lesser Armenia (born 1342 – died 1393), during his imprisonment in Cairo between 1375 and 1377, by soliciting John V Palaiologos to intercede in his favour with the Egyptian Sultan.⁴²

Due to her ties to the Lusignan dynasty in Cyprus, Isabelle was also important to the Venetians. While for most of the thirteenth century, Cyprus had been marginal to Venetian long-distance trade, with the collapse of the Frankish states of the Levant in 1291 the geopolitics of the region shifted, and Cyprus, now flooded with refugees with Venetian ties from the Levant, became a critical part of the Venetian commercial network. Furthermore, when Pope Nicholas IV established a trade embargo with Mamluk Egypt and Syria, Cyprus became not only an important commercial regional partner, but also an intermediary in long distance trade with Asia.⁴³

⁴² See Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIVe siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène', 72.

⁴³ David Jacoby, 'The Venetians in Byzantine and Lusignan Cyprus: Trade, Settlement, and Politics', in *Η ΓΑΛΗΝΟΤΑΤΗ ΚΑΙ Η ΕΥΓΕΝΕΣΤΑΤΗ: Η Βενετία στην Κύπρο και η Κύπρος στη Βενετία* /

In the complex climate created by the intertwined relationships between the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi in the Morea, Isabelle de Lusignan became a crucial mediator between the Byzantines, the Franks, the Cypriots and the Venetians.⁴⁴ For example, in 1368 she acted as a Byzantine ambassador on behalf of her husband Manuel Kantakouzenos when, in Methone, she greeted her second cousin Peter I de Lusignan King of Cyprus while he was returning from a visit to Venice.⁴⁵

After Manuel's death, the title of despot was briefly held by Matthew and Demetrios, son and nephew respectively of John VI Kantakouzenos (Table 1). Theodore I Palaiologos (born 1350s – died in Mystras 24 June 1407 as the monk Theodoretos) was the fourth son of John V and Helena Kantakouzene, and succeeded to the throne of his uncle Matthew and cousin Demetrios.⁴⁶ Theodore I was therefore at the heart of the dynastic plans of both families (Table 1). He was despot of Morea from 1380/81 until 1407. Theodore I was a close ally to his brother, Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (born Constantinople 27 July 1350 – died in Constantinople 21 July? 1425), helping him to defend and control the Peloponnese in a period of great upheaval, due to revolts of the local nobility and threat of invasions of the Ottomans.⁴⁷

'Serenissima' and 'la Nobilissima': *Venice in Cyprus and Cyprus in Venice*, ed. Άγγελ Νικολάου-Κονναρή (ΠολιτιστικόΊδρυμα Τραπεζης Κύπρου, 2009), 59–100, esp. 65–67.

⁴⁴ Anthony Luttrell, 'John V's Daughters: A Palaiologan Puzzle', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 40 (1986): 103–12, 104.

⁴⁵ Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIVe siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène', esp. 69.

⁴⁶ On the dynastic interactions between the Kantakouzenoi and Palaiologoi in the Morea, see Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, 105–106, 137–38.

⁴⁷ Florin Leonte, 'A Brief "History of the Morea" as Seen through the Eyes of an Emperor-Rhetorician. Manuel II Palaiologos's Funeral Oration for Theodore, Despot of Morea', in *Viewing the*

In 1384 Theodore I married Bartholomea Acciaiuoli (whose birth and death dates are unknown), daughter of Nerio I Acciaiuoli, Lord of Corinth and Athens and founder of the Florentine Duchy of Athens.⁴⁸ Their marriage was part of a dynastic strategy on the part of the Palaiologoi, possibly to make a claim on the Duchy of Athens, and certainly to secure financial help for the Despotate, thanks to the banking activities of the Acciaiuoli.⁴⁹

Relatively little is known about Bartholomea. She was wife of the despot at a time when the Despotate needed resources, and relations with the Venetians were strained. We know that she received 9,700 ducats from her father, the same amount that Theodore I Palaiologos had received from Nerio as a loan.⁵⁰ We also know that the Acciaiuoli and the Palaiologoi were military allies. They fought together and took Athens from the Catalans in 1388, after which the Acciaiuoli maintained control of it until June 1456. In exchange for the assistance of the Palaiologoi, Nerio helped his son in law fight the Venetians between 1389-90. In 1388, Venice had gained control of Argos and Nauplion, thanks to the marriage of Pietro Cornaro with Maria d'Enghien.⁵¹ The conflict over these two cities, between the Venetians on one side and Theodore assisted by Nerio on the other, led to Venice gaining Nauplion, while Theodore I got Argos. However, it also revealed the unbalanced nature of the

Morea. *Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 397–417.

⁴⁸ Guido Andreini, 'Gli Acciaiuoli in Grecia', in *Studi - R. Istituto tecnico commerciale a indirizzo mercantile Emanuele Filiberto Duca d'Aosta* (Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1940), 7–20.

⁴⁹ Małgorzata Dąbrowska, 'Ought One to Marry? Manuel II Palaiologos' Point of View', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 31, no. 2 (2007): 146–156, esp. 153.

⁵⁰ Helen G. Saradi, 'The Frankish Morea: Evidence Provided by Acts of Private Transactions', in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 187–211, 202.

⁵¹ Roberto Cessi, 'Venezia e l'acquisto di Nauplia ed Argo', *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 30, no. 1 (1915): 147–73, esp. 150-57, 160-162, 166-67, 169-71.

alliance between Theodore and the Acciaiuoli. Nerio had been captured on 10 September 1389. The Venetians had asked for Argos and the equivalent of 15,000 ducats in exchange for his freedom, but the despot of Morea did not pay, choosing to hold on to Argos instead. Nerio was forced to pay his own ransom.

From 1381 to 1460 all the Despots of Mystras were sons and brothers of Palaiologan emperors (Table 1), who established strong control of the city.⁵² This tightly linked the fate of Mystras to the imperial court. The Palaiologos dynasty maintained control of the office of the emperor of the *Romaioi* longer than any other dynasty in its history: from 1261, when Michael VIII Palaiologos re-conquered Constantinople putting an end to the Latin Empire, to 1453, when Constantinople fell to the Ottomans of Mehmed II (born 1432 – died 1481).

Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos, who ruled from 1391 to 1425, was particularly important for the purposes of this research. The second son of John V Palaiologos and Helena Kantakouzene, he was married to Helena Dragaš.⁵³ He travelled

⁵² The presence in the city of a member of the imperial family became essential for the control of the region. When around 1382/3 the son of the Emperor John V Palaiologos, Theodore I, arrived in Mystras as despot, a series of internal problem awaited him. 'According to a now lost late fourteenth-century inscription found in Parori, near Mystras, which gives a brief account of Theodore's deeds from 1382 to 1389, the despot was engaged in a relentless fight against the disobedient landlords of the Byzantine Morea during the first years of his rule. The local landlords, described as "lovers of dissension" and "treacherous to authority," made every effort to drive Theodore out of the Peloponnese [...]', in Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 236.

⁵³ On Manuel II Palaiologos, see George T. Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica, 1382-1387*, 159 (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1960); Giuseppe Schirò, 'Manuele II Paleologo incorona Carlo Tocco Despota di Giannina', *Byzantion* 29–30 (1960): 209–30; John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1969); *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus: Text, Translation and Notes* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1977); Steven Runciman, 'The Marriages of the Sons of the Emperor Manuel II', *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 1 (1981): 273–80; Leonte, 'A Brief "History of the Morea" as Seen through the Eyes of an Emperor-Rhetorician. Manuel II Palaiologos's Funeral Oration for Theodore, Despot of Morea'. A recent study on Manuel II Palaiologos is by Celik Siren, 'A Historical Biography of Manuel II Palaiologos (1350-1425)' (University of Birmingham, School of Historical Studies, Centre for Byzantine Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, 2016).

extensively in Europe between 1399 and 1403 and was tied to a number of intellectuals, such as Georgios Gemistos Plethon (born Constantinople ca. 1360 – died Mystras 26 June 1452), Guarino da Verona (born Verona 1374 – died Ferrara 4 December 1460), and Manuel Chrysoloras (born ca. 1350 – died in Constance 15 April 1415). He is probably best known for the reconstruction of the *Hexamilion* on the isthmus of Corinth, which was used as the most important defensive element of the Peloponnese. He was responsible for negotiating mixed marriages between Orthodox men and Catholic women, and shared Pope Martin V Colonna's (born Genazzano 1369/70 – died in Rome, 20 February 1431) plan to reunite Roman Catholic Europe and Orthodox Byzantium, increasingly under threat from the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ They arranged the first marriage of his son, John VIII Palaiologos (born 17/18 December 1392 – died Constantinople 31 October 1448) to Sophia of Monferrato, and his younger brother Theodore II's marriage to Cleophe Malatesti (born in Pesaro – died in Mystras 1433).

Theodore II (born ca. 1395 – died in Selymbria 26 June? 1448) was despot of Morea from 1407 to 1443. During that period, he pursued strong expansionist policies in the Peloponnese, with the help of his brothers Constantine (born 8 February 1405 – died in Constantinople 29 May 1453) and Thomas (born Constantinople 1409 – died in Rome 12 May 1465). During the years of Theodore II's Despotate, the situation in the Peloponnese was deeply unstable. Thomas, Constantine (who was co-emperor),

⁵⁴ On the political agenda of Martin V and Manuel II Palaiologos, see Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo'; Silvestros Syropoulos, *Les mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, ed. Vitalien Laurent (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1971), 108. For the transcription of the letter, see Odorico Rinaldi, *Annales Ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi Card. Baronius desinit* (Roma: Iacobi Dragondelii, 1659), n. 17; Kenneth M Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976), vol. II 'The Fifteenth century'.

and Demetrios (born Constantinople 1407/8 – died in Adrianople, 1470) were all active in the region, attempting to exert and, where possible, expand territorial control.

Cleophe Malatesti was daughter of Malatesta IV Malatesti, Lord of Pesaro (born 1372 – died 1429), captain in service of the Venice Republic, and poet. She is important to this dissertation because of the available documentary sources related to her, briefly described below. Historians have begun understanding Cleophe Malatesti's role only in the last few decades.⁵⁵ Silvia Ronchey has written the most significant contribution about her short life.⁵⁶

She was educated in the very dynamic cultural environment of the Court of Rimini and Pesaro. Her Italian origins and the prominence of the court of the Malatesti meant she was familiar with the intellectual and artistic climate of other Italian courts. Evidence of this can be found around her, in the literary and artistic production at the Malatesti court: for example, the literary production of her father, Malatesta dei Sonetti, or the isotonic motet *Vasilissa Ergo Gaude*, which Guillaume Dufay composed to celebrate Cleophe's marriage and her possible future as *vasilissa*, *basilissa*, queen of the Byzantine Despotate.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ On Cleophe Malatesti, see in general Erich Trapp, *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Byzantinistik (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976), 21385; Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, vol. I, 188-89 and 351-52; Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', in *Le donne di casa Malatesti*, 2004, 603–10.

⁵⁶ Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo', esp. 525-32.

⁵⁷ A critical edition of the rhymes of Cleophe Malatesti's father can be found in Malatesta Malatesti, *Rime* (Parma: Studium Parmense, 1981). On Dufay's motet, see Margaret Vardell Sandresky, 'The Golden Section in Three Byzantine Motets of Dufay', *Journal of Music Theory* 25, no. 2 (1981): 291–306.

Cleophe's family was connected to the most influential Italian families of the time, including the Colonna, the da Varano, the Orsini, the Gonzaga and the Montefeltro families (Table 2).⁵⁸ Her sister, Paola, also referred to in this dissertation, married Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, and her brother, Galeazzo Malatesta, married Battista di Montefeltro (born ca. 1384 – died 1448). Her brother Carlo married in 1416 Vittoria Colonna, niece of Pope Martin V Colonna.⁵⁹ She was the cousin of the Italian *condottiere* Sigismondo Malatesti (born in Brescia, 19 June 1417 – died Rimini, 9 October 1468), Lord of Rimini, who led an expedition against the Ottomans in an attempt to regain control of the Morea from 1464 to 1465.⁶⁰

As a Latin princess in the late Byzantine Empire, Cleophe's life and personal story represent the complex interactions between Eastern and Western Europe, and in Morea she was a Western diplomat of sorts as suggested, for example, by the interest the Venetian Republic took in her as the sister of the Archbishop of Patras.⁶¹ After her arrival in Mystras, Cleophe not only joined the Palaiologan imperial family but

⁵⁸ For a general introduction to Rimini's and Pesaro's political, cultural and artistic environment, see Enrico Angiolini and Anna Falcioni, *La signoria di Malatesta dei Sonetti Malatesti (1391-1429)* (Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2002); *La Signoria di Carlo Malatesti (1385-1429)* (Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2001); Antonio Carile, 'Pesaro nel medioevo: problemi di storia delle istituzioni e della società', in *Pesaro tra medioevo e Rinascimento* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1990), 3–54; Piergiorgio Parroni, 'La cultura letteraria a Pesaro sotto i Malatesta e gli Sforza', in *Pesaro tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1990), 203–22.

⁵⁹ Cecil H. Clough, 'Daughters and Wives of the Montefeltro: Outstanding Bluestockings of the Quattrocento', *Renaissance Studies* 10 (1996): 31–55, esp. 44–45.

⁶⁰ On the Venetian – Ottoman conflict of 1462–1479, see Philip J. Jones, 'The Papal Reconquest', in *The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State: A Political History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 240–61; Stefan Stantchev, 'Devedo: The Venetian Response to Sultan Mehmed II in the Venetian-Ottoman Conflict of 1462–79', *Mediterranean Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 43–66.

⁶¹ See Cancelleria Segreta, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Reg. X, 1426–1428, c. 153, 119, 1428, die IX Junii, transcribed in Sathas, *Μνημεία Ἑλληνικῆς ιστορίας. Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, vol. I [1880], 188.

also became acquainted with the scholarly community gathered around the philosopher George Gemistos Plethon.⁶²

The value of inter-faith marriages could be deeply strategic in a region with so many intersecting polities. As another example from the Palaiologoi, Sphrantzes recounts that, on June 1, 1429, Thomas Palaiologos had put under siege Glarentza, a castle of Prince Centurione Zaccaria Asan, whose daughter, Caterina Zaccaria, Thomas would later marry.⁶³ Centurione was married to a daughter of Leonardo Tocco. Constantine Palaiologos also married a daughter of Tocco, Theodora, in July 1, 1428,⁶⁴ who died soon thereafter in November 1429.⁶⁵ So, when an ambassador of Centurione brought the keys of the castle to Constantine, he mentioned to Constantine that Centurione was married to a sister of his wife. Sphrantzes' story highlights how much marriages could run through geopolitics. Here we are presented with a relation between enemies, Constantine and Centurione, running through the Tocco sisters, who they had both married, and who are daughters of a third enemy, the despot of Epirus in Arta. The trace of dynastic alliances continued all along the evolution of the Despotate, reflecting the shifting power relations in the region.

I.2.d The end of the Despotate

By the mid fifteenth century, the territory of the empire had significantly shrunk around the Despotate of Morea. The years between 1439 and 1444, before the end of

⁶² Christopher M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Marco Bertozzi, 'Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e il mito del paganesimo antico: dal Concilio di Ferrara al Tempio Malatestiano di Rimini', in *Sul Ritorno di Pletone. Un Filosofo a Rimini* (Rimini: Raffaelli Editore, 2003), 81–104.

⁶³ Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XIX-7/8, 60-61.

⁶⁴ Sphrantzes, XVI-3, 38-39.

⁶⁵ Sphrantzes, XX-9, 68-69.

the Despotate of Theodore II Palaiologos, mark the final years of the Council of Ferrara-Florence, the prevailing of the anti-unionist positions within Byzantine political strategy, and the failure of the Crusade of Varna in 1444, all important framing historical factors in determining the progressive deterioration of the capacity of Western polities to act and interact within the Despotate of Morea.⁶⁶ Thomas Palaiologos was the last despot of Mystras. At the death of John VIII in 1449, his brother Constantine became Emperor Constantine XI and was the last Byzantine emperor. In 1460 Thomas surrendered the Despotate of Morea to Mehmed II and the Ottomans, and fled to Italy.

I.3 Existing scholarship on Mystras' cultural production

Modern academic work on the city of Mystras started with the French missions to survey the Morea at the end of the nineteenth century – the “Expédition scientifique de Morée”.⁶⁷ The exploration of the city of Mystras by Gabriel Millet marked the first systematic cataloguing of the heritage of the city.⁶⁸ In his survey he reviewed the architecture, provided documentation on the frescoes in the city's churches, and catalogued the surviving stone materials.⁶⁹ Prior to this publication, between 1899

⁶⁶ See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, esp. 209-21, 259-84.

⁶⁷ See the three volumes of Abel Blouet, ed., *Expédition scientifique de Morée, ordonnée par le gouvernement français. Architecture, sculptures, inscriptions et vues du Péloponèse, des Cyclades et de l'Attique* (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1831-, 1838).

⁶⁸ Gabriel Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910).

⁶⁹ Throughout the dissertation the words ‘fresco’, ‘frescoes’ and ‘frescoed’ refer to wall paintings in general. In some cases these terms indicate actual mural paintings executed with fresco technique, other times they are employed to refer to wall paintings carried out both with a mixture of fresco and secco (dry) technique, or just with dry technique. This simplification has been employed because only chemical and spectrographic visual surveys can reveal the actual nature of the painted decoration discussed in this study. While important, these surveys were neither considered nor carried out for the scope and goals of this dissertation. For a recent discussion on Byzantine painted techniques in the late period, see Ioanna Kakoulli, Michael Schilling, and Joy Mazurek, ‘The Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa: A Technical Examination’, in *Asinou across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus*, ed. Annemarie Weyl Carr and Andréas Nicolaïdès

and 1906, Millet published two long essays in which he documented and commented on most of the Byzantine inscriptions found in Mystras.⁷⁰ An earlier partial catalogue of these inscriptions by Konstantinos Zesios was published in 1892.⁷¹ With his large volume, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra* (1910), Millet delivered the first definitive catalogue of the architecture, stonework and frescoes of Mystras. In 1916 Millet published two books in which he analysed the architecture and the frescoes that he had documented in 1910.⁷² In the first he studied the iconography of the New Testament in the churches of Mystras, comparing the cycles with those found in Macedonia and on Mount Athos. In the second he operated a systematic reading of what he defined as Greek architecture in the context of the Byzantine Empire.

From the point of view of the development of art history, the researcher who collected the threads of Millet's work was Suzy Dufrenne, who, in 1970, published a book on the iconographic programmes of the Byzantine churches in Mystras.⁷³ To this day, it is the most systematic study of the frescoes in the city's churches. In her publication, Dufrenne also provided the state of the art of the studies on the architecture in Mystras. Dufrenne contextualized the iconographic programmes within art of the late Byzantine period, putting them in relation to the monumental art of the Palaiologan period, while confirming the architectural uniqueness of Mystras.

(Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012), 313–59. In particular regarding wall paintings mixing fresco and secco techniques, see Kakoulli, Schilling, and Mazurek, esp. 317-19 and 355-56.

⁷⁰ Gabriel Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 23 (1899): 97–156; Gabriel Millet, 'Inscriptions inédites de Mistra', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 30, no. 1 (1906): 453–66.

⁷¹ Κωνσταντίνος Γ. Ζήσιος, *Σύμμικτα Πελοποννήσου επιγραφαί χριστιανικών χρόνων, Χρυσόβουλλα Μυστρά, έρευνα περί της πολιορκίας και Αλώσεως της Ακροπόλεως υπό Βενετών, Καπνικαρέα - Καμουκαρέα* (Αθήνησι: Περρής, 1892).

⁷² Gabriel Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1916); Gabriel Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1916).

⁷³ Suzy Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1970).

Both Millet and Dufrenne had a strong intuition for the complexity of its artistic production. They implied a degree of autonomy for local expressions, but read them solely within the context of Christian art.

In the eighties, the guide by art historian Manoles Chatzedakes first published in Greek in the forties, was released in English in a revised edition.⁷⁴ In this guide, mostly a descriptive text, he synthesized previous important studies on Mystras, while fixing the dating for most of its architectures and fresco cycles.⁷⁵ With his review, the presentation of the artistic production of Mystras was placed within the history of Byzantine art. During more or less the same period, historical studies of Mystras gained popularity, in particular with the last work of Steven Runciman. It was with his book *Mistra: Byzantine Capital of the Peloponnese*, published in 1980, that the idea of Mystras as a capital of the late Byzantine Empire was cemented.⁷⁶

From the eighties of the twentieth century, a number of Greek scholars have studied the art and architecture of Mystras. Nikolaos Drandakes conducted a survey of Byzantine architecture and frescoes in Lakonia, including Mystras.⁷⁷ More recent

⁷⁴ Manoles Chatzedakes, *Mystras: The Medieval City and the Castle: A Complete Guide to the Churches, Palaces, and the Castle* (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1981).

⁷⁵ For a critique of some Chatzedakes' dating, see Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists'; Titos Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras', in *Viewing of Morea. Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), 371–96.

⁷⁶ Steven Runciman, *Mistra: Byzantine Capital of the Peloponnese* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980); then reprinted as Steven Runciman, *Lost Capital of Byzantium: The History of Mistra and the Peloponnese* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2009).

⁷⁷ Νικόλαος Β Δρανδάκης, 'Ανασκαφή παρεκκλησίων του Μυστρά', *Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 107 (1952): 497–591; Νικόλαος Β. Δρανδάκης, 'Τοιχογραφίες στα παρεκκλήσια του Μυστρά', *Πεπραγμένα του 9ου Διεθνούς Βυζαντινολογικού Συνεδρίου (Θεσσαλονίκη, 12-19 Απριλίου 1953)* Α' (1955): 154–78; Νικόλαος Β Δρανδάκης, 'Ανασκαφή παρεκκλησίου εν Μυστρά', *Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 114 (1959): 160–61; Νικόλαος Β. Δρανδάκης, 'Ο Άϊ-Γιαννάκης του Μυστρά', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 14 (1988 1987): 61–82; Νικόλαος Β. Δρανδάκης, 'Σπαράγματα τοιχογραφιών από παρεκκλήσια του Μυστρά', *Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς* 134

studies of its art and architecture have advanced our understanding of individual monuments and cycles, include Georgia Marinou's systematic architectural study of the Metropolis, Rodinike Etzeoglou's detailed study of the frescoed cycles of Mystras, and in particular her effective analysis of the frescoes of the narthex of the Hodegetria church, Aspasia Louve-Kize's analysis and re-dating of the construction phases of the Peribleptos, Tito Papamastorakes' re-dating of the frescoes of the south chapel of the Hodegetria and of Aï-Giannaki, Maria Aspra-Vardavake's and Melita Emmanouel's systematic reading of the frescoes of the Pantanassa, and Stefan Sinos's systematic reading of the architecture of the same church.⁷⁸

The reading of Byzantine art in Mystras became more nuanced with the scholarship of Doula Mouriki.⁷⁹ In particular, she studied wall paintings, analysing in detail

(1995): 1–28; Νικόλαος Β. Δρανδάκης, 'Σχεδιάσμα καταλόγου των τοιχογραφημένων Βυζαντινών και Μεταβυζαντινών Ναών Λακωνίας', *Λακωνικαί Σπουδαι* 13 (1996): 167–236.

⁷⁸ Γεωργία Μαρίνου, *Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Ταμείου Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων & Απαλλοτριώσεων, 2002); Ασπασία Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλήπτου του Μυστρά', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 42 (2003): 101–18; Rodoniki Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32 (1982): 513–21; Rodoniki Etzeoglou, 'The Cult of the Virgin Zoodochos Pege at Mistra', in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 238–49; Ροδονίκη Ετζεόγλου, *Ο ναός της Οδηγήτριας του Βροντοχίου στο Μυστρά. Οι τοιχογραφίες του νάρθηκα και η λειτουργική χρήση του χώρου* (Αθήνα: Ακαδημία Αθηνών, 2013); Μαρία Ασπρά-Βαρδαβάκη and Μελίτα Εμμανουήλ, *Η Μονή της Παντάνασσας στον Μυστρά: Οι τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αιώνα* (Αθήνα: Εμπορική Τράπεζα της Ελλάδος, 2005); Στέφανος Σίνος, ed., *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Committee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras* (Αθήνα: Ταμείο Διαχείρισης Πιστώσεων για την Εκτέλεση Αρχαιολογικών Έργων, 2009); Στέφανος Σίνος, *Η αρχιτεκτονική του καθολικού της Μονής της Παντάνασσας του Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Πατάκης, 2013); Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists'; Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras'.

⁷⁹ Doula Mouriki, 'Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism', in *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students*, vol. 7, Harvard Ukrainian Studies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 458–88; Doula Mouriki, 'Palaeologan Mistra and the West', in *Βυζάντιο και Ευρώπη: Α' Διεθνής Βυζαντινολογική Συνάντηση, Δελφοί, 20-24 Ιουλίου, 1985 = Byzantium and Europe: First International Byzantine Conference, Delphi, 20-24 July, 1985*, ed. Αθανάσιος Μαρκόπουλος (Αθήνα: Ευρωπαϊκό Πολιτιστικό Κέντρο Δελφών, 1987), 473–510; *The Twilight of Byzantium: Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire. Papers from the Colloquium Held at Princeton University 8-9 May 1989* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Doula Mouriki, 'The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a

stylistic tendencies, the relationship with the West, and their broader cultural content, such as their references to antique visual culture. Mouriki offered a more articulated reading of these artefacts, one that goes beyond a Christian-Orthodox comprehension. She was not only interested in the relationship between fresco cycles and theology and liturgy of the late Palaiologan period, as Dufrenne was, but also went on to examine the broader set of cultural implications embedded in the frescoes.

The scholarship of Sophia Kalopissi-Verti gave an important contribution to the studies of the artistic production in Mystras. She investigated the social implications of the art of the late period, relating it to the context of production, and studying its patronage, including some case studies from Mystras.⁸⁰

In 1989, Mystras was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and became the object of requalification and restoration programmes by the Committee for the

Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting', in *The Twilight of Byzantium: Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire. Papers from the Colloquium Held at Princeton University 8-9 May 1989* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 217–49; Doula Mouriki, 'The Wall Paintings of the Pantanassa at Mistra: Models of the Painting in the Fifteenth Century', in *The Twilight of Byzantium*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Doula Mouriki (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 217–31; Doula Mouriki, *Studies in Late Byzantine Painting* (London: Pindar Press, 1995).

⁸⁰ Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, *Die Kirche der Hagia Triada bei Kranidi in der Argolis (1244)* (München: Inst. für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie, 1975); Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Tendenze stilistiche della pittura monumentale in Grecia durante il XIII secolo', *Corso di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* 31 (1984): 221–53; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992); Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters in Late Byzantine Society. The Evidence of Church Inscriptions', *Cahiers Archéologiques; Fin de l'Antiquité et Moyen Âge* 42 (1994): 139–58; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period', in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1551): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New York, N.Y.: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 76–97; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters's information on themselves in late Byzantine church inscriptions', in *L'artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2007), 55–70; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Aspects of Byzantine art after the recapture of Constantinople (1261 - c. 1300): reflections of imperial policy, reactions, confrontation with the Latins', in *Orient et occident méditerranéens au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Picard, 2012), 41–64; Sharon E. J. Gerstel and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 60, no. 1 (2012): 195–211; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, 'Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement', in *Heaven & Earth: Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece*, ed. Jenny Albani and Eugenia Chalkia, vol. II, II vols (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), 224–39.

Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras presided by Stefanos Sinos and Georgia Marinou. In 2001 the exhibition *Byzantine Hours: Works and Days in Byzantium* presented a collection of materials and recent studies not only about the art and architecture of Mystras, but also about the archaeological and material culture objects preserved in the museum of Mystras.⁸¹

More recently, the study of the visual and cultural production of Mystras and of the Morea has been further developed by Sharon Gerstel's scholarship, as discussed below in the methodology section. Building on the work of Gerstel, Michalis Kappas has also recently contributed to the understanding of the artistic production of Mystras by contextualizing it and that of Monembasia in discussing Kastania, a small village where at the end of the thirteenth century he finds iconography and signs of patronage that reflect the context of the two larger production centres. This comparison helps us understand the multicultural environment of late Byzantine Morea, showing how certain artistic details and motifs are diffused between centres, especially from Mystras to Kastania, and how such details provide information on the associated patrons.⁸²

Historians who have worked on Mystras and the Morea studying the late Byzantine Empire have noted some of the figures discussed in this dissertation. These historians include Dionysios Zakythenos, Antoine Bon, John Barker, Donald Nicol and Nevra

⁸¹ *The City of Mystras [Mystras, August 2001-January 2002]* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2001).

⁸² See Michalis Kappas, 'Approaching Monemvasia and Mystras from the Outside: The View from Kastania', in *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 147–81.

Necipoğlu.⁸³ For a specific historical point of view on inter-faith marriages and on the women at the Palaiologan imperial court, it is important to mention the studies of Zakythenos, Julian Chrysostomides, and more recently Silvia Ronchey.⁸⁴ While the former study these events from a historical perspective, Ronchey examines them also as a cultural phenomenon, as does Diana Gilliland Wright.⁸⁵ A recent unpublished study on the women of the late imperial court was authored by Ann M. Williams.⁸⁶

While much of the material considered in this thesis is therefore familiar, the various strands of inquiry have rarely been integrated, with few exceptions, which will be discussed below. Historians have typically omitted any consideration of the artistic production, while art historians have not referred to historical figures, specifically examining the relationship between the cultural production and their presence. When it comes to the cultural production of Mystras, previous scholars — with the partial exception of Mouriki — do not analyse the materials beyond the process of identifying the painted imagery.

⁸³ Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIVe siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène'; Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*; Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*; Bon, *La Morée franque; recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)*; Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100-1460; a Genealogical and Prosopographical Study*; Donald M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits, 1250-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*; Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*.

⁸⁴ Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIVe siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène'; Chrysostomides, 'Italian women in Greece during the late 14th and early 15th centuries'; Silvia Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', in *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo*, ed. Gianfranco Fiaccadori (Napoli: Vivarium, 1994), 47–66; Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo'; Silvia Ronchey, *L'enigma di Piero: l'ultimo bizantino e la crociata fantasma nella rivelazione di un grande quadro* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2006).

⁸⁵ Diana Gilliland Wright, 'Surprised by Time: Plethon's Cleofe', *Surprised by Time*, 17 December 2014, <http://surprisedbytime.blogspot.com/2014/12/plethons-cleofe.html>.

⁸⁶ Anna M. Williams, 'Late Byzantine Imperial Women: Diplomacy and Gender' (University of Birmingham, School of Historical Studies, Centre for Byzantine Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, 2002).

I.4 The methodology

The title of this dissertation, *Latin Basilissai in Palaiologan Mystras: Art and Agency* reveals the methodological challenges it confronts. First, *Latin Basilissai in Palaiologan Mystras* refers to the cross-cultural, comparative nature of the arguments brought to interpret the artistic production of Mystras. Second, the use of the term art as an expansive analytic category that ranges from pictorial art to decorative sculpted elements, to other forms of cultural production, is not intended in the aesthetic sense, but rather in a broader context of culture. Third, the use of the term agency, signals an anthropological and sociological basis for the analytic framework employed in this dissertation.

This dissertation analyses cultural evidence of female agency, and considers the Catholic women at the court of Mystras as diverse historical figures with common attributes. In doing so, Isabelle de Lusignan, Bartholomea Acciaiuoli and Cleophe Malatesti are put back in the historical narration of the late Palaiologan era and can be understood as complex *personae*.

Demonstrating agency of historical figures in the absence of strong documentary evidence is challenging. Previous studies have explored the role of women in powerful positions in the Byzantine context, with particular attention to the lives of empresses, queens and princesses, both *porphyrogenitai*, born within the imperial family, or married into it.⁸⁷ Other Byzantine women recorded in primary sources are

⁸⁷ For a survey on the historiography on women in the early Middle Ages see Julia M. H. Smith, 'Introduction: Gendering the Early Medieval World', in *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–19. For a collection of historical portraits of imperial women in the late Byzantine period, see Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady*. For a recent methodological consideration on the

those who entered the monastic life.⁸⁸ Recent studies of imperial or religious women have improved our understanding of their lives by overcoming the limited — and at times biased — primary sources, supplementing biographical information with the study of ‘the political and social structures and ideological contexts with and within which Byzantine imperial women worked, lived, and assigned and found meaning’.⁸⁹

But when it comes to minor female rulers or less notable members of late Byzantine courts, only a few studies have discussed women as historical figures and cultural agents.⁹⁰ The historical study of women who lived in a Byzantine context as foreigners, and of their role as cultural agents, is particularly challenging. The Catholic wives of the Byzantine Despots of Morea are barely considered in the literature, and the cultural implications of their presence at the court of Mystras is poorly understood. In contrast to Orthodox women of the same era, it is far harder to associate these foreign women with textual, epigraphic, artistic and material cultural evidence marking significant events in their lives, such as weddings, patronage and donation acts, and funerals.⁹¹

historiography on women in Byzantium, see Judith Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), esp. 12–37.

⁸⁸ Alice-Mary Maffry Talbot, ‘Bluestocking Nuns: Intellectual Life in the Convents of Late Byzantium’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7 (1 January 1983): 604–18; Lioba Theis, Margaret Mullett, and Michael Grünbart, eds., *Female founders in Byzantium & beyond: an international colloquium : September 23–25, 2008, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, University of Vienna* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014).

⁸⁹ Janet L. Nelson, ‘Basilissai: Power and Its Limits’, *Basilissa. Belfast, Byzantium and Beyond* I (2004): 125.

⁹⁰ Ronchey, ‘Malatesta - Paleologhi: un’alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo’; Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Female Church Founders’; Sharon E. J. Gerstel and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium’, in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 195–212; Sarah T. Brooks, ‘Women’s Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium’, in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 317–32; Florin Leonte, ‘A Late Byzantine Patroness: Helena Kantakouzene Palaiologina’, in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 345–53.

⁹¹ Brooks, ‘Women’s Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium’, esp. 317–18.

A particularly useful articulation of what agency is, comes from Gell's anthropology of art.⁹² Gell worked in response to linguistic or semantic models of art history, and to established aesthetic categories. Like others before him (Warburg, Panofsky, Bourdieu) he drew from a number of fields – psychology, semiotics, aesthetics – to build an anthropology of art explaining the conception and realization of art.⁹³ In his theory, an art nexus made of artists, prototypes, indices and recipients relate to each other in an agent-patient relationship,⁹⁴ based on a cognitive process of abduction, a form of inference distinct from induction or deduction.⁹⁵

One of the most profound implications of Gell's work is the idea that the agent-patient relationship can be established between any one of the elements of the art nexus. So, not only the artist can be an agent: art objects – indices – can exercise agency too, as can prototypes and recipients. This analytic framework allows for the creation of agency hierarchies, making explicit the logic chain connecting different agents. For example, specific artistic products in Italy may exercise the agency of their sponsors on travellers who observe them, who in turn might then become agents themselves, as patrons of other indices. This approach constructs a series of logical steps that can link, for example, the Latin women in Mystras and their courts of origin to the production in the city.

⁹² Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁹³ For a general introduction to Gell's work, see Jeremy Tanner and Robin Osborne, 'Art and Agency and Art History', in *Art's Agency and Art History* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 1–27. For an application of the same methodology in studying performative practices in the twentieth century, see Andrea Mattiello, 'Pratiche performative a New York, 1952-1965: Jonas, Kaprow, Nauman, Schneemann: ricerca, tempo e montaggio: dottorato di ricerca d'eccellenza in storia dell'architettura e della città, scienza delle arti, restauro, 19. ciclo (a. a. 2003/2004-2005/2006): tesi di dottorato' (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia; Università IUAV di Venezia; Fondazione Scuola studi avanzati in Venezia, 2007), esp. 9-14.

⁹⁴ Gell, *Art and Agency*, esp. 28-50.

⁹⁵ Umberto Eco, *Trattato di semiotica generale*, Studi Bompiani. Campo semiotico (Milano: Bompiani, 1978), esp. 185-87.

While Gell's work provides the language and framework to understand the logic of agency, there are profound limitations to Gell's work. It is, for example, a poor framework to relate broader historical narratives to the creative process. That is because he relies on a poorly defined idea of vicinity to limit the otherwise infinite set of logically consistent recursive agency relations that could in principle link an index to any far away context. But what that vicinity is, is not really specified in his theory and is left to arbitrariness.⁹⁶

For this reason, we have to complement the use of this anthropological toolkit with historical analysis where possible and with a number of comparisons that allow us to identify which abductive processes are actually historically relevant. And so, we either seek to identify a similar process of abduction in art objects in other contexts, for example by comparing images of donors in frescoes in Mystras with those in frescoes in Italy, or we look for the same process of abduction across different types of objects in the same context, from pictorial programmes to architectural elements.

There are of course limitations to this approach as well. While we are concerned with the agency of Latin women in Mystras, we are not arguing that what was abducted was always their agency. In the examples examined in this dissertation we see a range of agencies at work: in some cases the Latin women are the principal agent while in others they are a secondary agent in a much more articulated chain of inference. Furthermore, the analysis is almost always inadequate without an appropriate historical contextualization. For example, when considering the

⁹⁶ Whitney Davis, 'Abducting the Agency of Art', in *Art's Agency and Art History* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 199–219, esp. 214–15.

monogram of the Lusignan family on an architrave, the logic that connects the relationship between Isabelle de Lusignan's presence in Mystras to the commissioning of the decoration, to those seeing it in the church is relatively short. But it is only by providing the historical context – the geopolitics and commercial relations between Cyprus, Venice and the Byzantine Empire – that the analysis acquires explanatory power. In other cases, the process of abduction may have been attenuated. For example, detecting which agency is expressed through the frescoed representation of Italian fashion, which reprises material objects found in Mystras and which may originate from the context of the court of origin of the Latin *basilissai*, is difficult. However, comparative evidence from across Italy reveals a common evolution, which can be explained in the context of the demographic and economic transition of fourteenth century Europe. Through a number of examples, we reinforce what may be only barely detectable through a single example.

While this process of inference may be superfluous and convoluted in the presence of documents that provide historical evidence for the causal links between social relations and artistic production, such as commissioning documents, letters specifying sponsorship of particular projects, or even specific historical accounts, it becomes essential in their absence. That is precisely the case for the Latin *basilissai*. While we have contextual historical knowledge of their lives, we do not have any documentary evidence linking them to the artistic and cultural production in Mystras. They live in the shadow of documentary history. We therefore rely on a repeated application of an inference process across comparative examples and across classes of objects to establish those links.

The multidisciplinary nature of the evidence associated with Catholic wives in Mystras constitutes a network of indices that, once analysed in detail and linked in a historical framework, helps to explain the role that these women had in the context of the late Byzantine Morea, the Adriatic and the Ionian states. Our approach deals with both written and non-written sources. Here, it is useful to consider a few methodological approaches that confront a similarly heterogeneous set of sources.

Studies of different periods, such as that by Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon on the Iconoclast Era, in which the visual confronts the historical, and material culture helps us to understand documentary sources, also deal with a broad range of sources and materials – design and architecture, fresco and sculpture, archaeology and literary evidence – and provide a comparative methodological example.⁹⁷

When considering written sources, Judith Herrin's *Unrivalled influence*, identifies 'positions, activity and authority of women in Byzantine society', and indicates a route to the comprehension of agency that can be deduced from a variety of written sources.⁹⁸ Though preoccupied with the early and middle period, she provides three useful avenues in dealing with indirect, direct unconscious and direct conscious agency of women reordered on primary textual sources.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ While introducing their study on the Iconoclast Era Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon write: 'Our aim [...] is to re-examining these themes, to interrogate the assumptions made by older as well as more recent historians in the light of what we understand from the sources – written, archaeological, representational – and to draw some conclusions about the structure, the dynamic, and shape of Byzantine society across two centuries with which we are concerned. At the same time, we hope to show how the different elements of this complex picture are articulated and to demonstrate the key causal relationships which led to change and transformation', in Leslie Brubaker and John F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

⁹⁸ Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 13.

⁹⁹ Herrin, 13–14.

In the first, such as Herrin's examination of the Canon 70 of the Council in Trullo, she uses written references to women in non-female sources. With each source, she analyses who writes, for whom, and what is written. An ecclesiastical condemnation of female identity in a source such as the Canon 70 is balanced by secondary textual accounts of women's voices by male authors,¹⁰⁰ adding another dimension to our understanding of the 'Femina Byzantina'.¹⁰¹ In this dissertation, we use a number of texts in this way. Local and foreign cultural and political authorities, addressing the Catholic women, produce texts such as those to commemorate Cleophe and those written about her and the Morea by Venetian authorities, as we will see later. The texts we examine are also associated with multiple male identities and are considered for what point of view they are written from, why, for whom, and how.

The second avenue looks at texts where it is clear that the woman is self-aware within the context of the legal and normative framework that she is given. Herrin resorts to mediated female voices, for example starting with the history of Maria, as told by a captain of a ship, edited by a monk, and examines legal documents such as wills. In the case of this dissertation we have the unusual privilege of having sources that are unmediated. With Cleophe's letters, as we shall see later, we examine in her direct, personal voice how external limits and internal conditioning change the expression of her desires.

Because many of the texts Herrin uses are monastic or religious, the third approach refers to ecclesiastical texts where female agency is expressed through abbesses, nuns, or even cooks. No such texts are available in the context of Mystras, although

¹⁰⁰ See for example the history of Maria as reported in the 'moral tales by John Moschos' in Herrin, 18–19, and the Passion of Perpetua in Herrin, 18–19, 83, 134.

¹⁰¹ Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, esp. 115–32.

direct conscious agency of her diplomatic role is expressed by Cleophe in her letters, as we shall see.¹⁰²

Herrin says, of her work, ‘the overall aim of these avenues is to illuminate a practical reality rather than a legal ideal’.¹⁰³ She indicates how ‘politically women might have little influence, depending on their male relatives, but in cultural terms they always play an important role not only domestically but also in the life of the church’.¹⁰⁴ She provides a framework to understand agency, but only speaks of Orthodox women tied to roles of power. In this study, on the other hand, we deal with women tied to positions of minor power who, subsequent conversions aside, are not Orthodox. In this dissertation, written sources help us articulate some of the authorities operating in the context of these women, thus interpreting the position these women have, the activities they pursue, the authority they exercise, and, therefore, the nature of their agency. But we can not complete this picture without non-written sources.

Turning to non-written sources, previous art-historical approaches to Mystras have represented its artistic production during the late period as exceptional within the Byzantine tradition. Mouriki expanded this view by analysing Mystras’ frescoes and integrating Orthodox Byzantine tradition alongside heterodox elements.¹⁰⁵ These studies hint at a layered context but never fully expand on it – see however

¹⁰² For Cleophe’s letters see below p. 44.

¹⁰³ Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Herrin, 29.

¹⁰⁵ Mouriki, ‘Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism’; Mouriki, ‘Palaeologan Mistra and the West’; Mouriki, ‘The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting’; Mouriki, ‘The Wall Paintings of the Pantanassa at Mistra: Models of the Painting in the Fifteenth Century’; Mouriki, *Studies in Late Byzantine Painting*.

Kalopissi-Verti, who expands on frescoes of the late period but focuses on a broader context.¹⁰⁶

Gerstel adopts an approach that marries a large-scale narrative of the history of Byzantine art, architecture and archaeology, with the plurality of subjects present and operating, for different historical reasons, in late medieval Peloponnese and Greece.¹⁰⁷ She presents a narrative that encompasses the many people who occupy the Peloponnese in the late Middle Ages, who put in motion processes of cultural — i.e. textual, visual, architectural, material, intellectual — production, thus presenting the complexity and heterogeneous nature of the cultural contexts of the Morea. She examines those contexts where the Orthodox Christian identity and that of the Byzantine state are fundamental, but where other religious and socio-political identities surface and interact. The importance of this approach derives in part from its capacity to point towards neglected areas of investigation, thus enriching the understanding and the historical relevance of late Byzantium.

This dissertation expands on the framework employed in Gerstel's scholarship while focusing on relations between non-Byzantine historical figures residing in Mystras

¹⁰⁶ Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*; Kalopissi-Verti, 'Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period'; Kalopissi-Verti, 'Painters's information on themselves in late Byzantine church inscriptions'; Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Female Church Founders'.

¹⁰⁷ Sharon E. J. Gerstel, 'Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998): 89–111; Gerstel, 'Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea'; Sharon E. J. Gerstel, 'Civic and Monastic Influences on Church Decoration in Late Byzantine Thessalonike: In Loving Memory of Thalia Gouma-Peterson', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 225–39; Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2006); Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Female Church Founders'; Gerstel, 'Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village. Ecclesiastical and Rural Landscape in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese'; Gerstel, 'The Morea'; Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium: Art, Archaeology, and Ethnography* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Sharon E. J. Gerstel, ed., *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

and the objects we see. It considers aspects of the production of the late Palaiologan court of Mystras that are autonomous compared to those of Constantinopolitan origin, and looks for cultural traces linking that production to Byzantine authorities and to the Latin women and their entourages in Mystras. Previous scholarship has already noted some of these autonomous aspects and traces in the cultural production of the city.¹⁰⁸ However, because of the limited documentary sources, a critical gap has been left in art historical discourse, particularly in relation to the cultural production of the city, which this thesis fills.

A precursor of the approach of this dissertation is that of Maria Parani.¹⁰⁹ She studies material culture through frescoes, including some in Mystras. She attempts a reading of the visual culture as a contribution to the history of the period she examines. In *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Parani recognizes the semiotic value of representations, but focuses on the fact that art historians do not typically try and match depiction with reality. She discusses Loerke's detailed analysis of the costumes and paraphernalia in the miniatures of the Trial of Christ in the Rossano Gospels, which reflected the sixth-century imperial standards, when the illumination of the gospels was carried out, and not the actual historical standards at the time of the trial, and describes how the meaning would have been obvious to patrons and observers of the arts in the sixth century.¹¹⁰ Parani's approach is to read appearance

¹⁰⁸ Mouriki, 'Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism', 458-88; Mouriki, 'Palaeologan Mistra and the West', 473-510; Mouriki, 'The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting', 217-31. Also see in general the essays in Gerstel, *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Maria G. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Parani, 'Cultural identity and dress'; Maria G. Parani, 'Encounters in the Realm of Dress: Attitudes towards Western Styles in the Greek East', in *Renaissance Encounters: Greek East – Latin West* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 261–301.

¹¹⁰ William C. Loerke, 'The Miniatures of the Trial in the Rossano Gospels', *The Art Bulletin* 43, no. 3 (1961): 171–95.

of *realia* as manifestations of a ‘single artistic phenomenon’.¹¹¹ The examination is another form of iconographic analysis. Parani is not attempting to explain why things are the way they are. She speaks to a semiotic function of *realia* and the occurrence and contemporary historical conditions and processes that bring the *realia* to be introduced in representational art.¹¹² She is working in a context where Byzantine art is always considered allegorical and does not represent an actual object. Cristina Stancioiu also examines pictorial evidence in order to detect occurrences of specific signs.¹¹³

Here we take a step further as we do not just look for historical processes, but the index of individual agency. In this dissertation we accept a degree of proximity between what is represented and the historical realities contextual to that representation – the people, the location, the relations – of realism in the art of the late period. We explore a case study germane to Parani’s conclusions, where we examine in detail specific agents – which she refers to as ‘creators’ – and how their agency has been received – abducted, in the language of Gell – into the art in Mystras.¹¹⁴

When considering the integration of heterogeneous sources, which refer to women that were alien to their context, Anthony Eastmond’s recent book *Tamta’s World* also offers relevant methodological ideas.¹¹⁵ In his book he structures the argument

¹¹¹ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 4.

¹¹² Parani, 10.

¹¹³ Cristina Stancioiu, ‘Objects and Identity: An Analysis of Some Material Remains of the Latin and Orthodox Residents of Late Medieval Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete’ (University of California, Los Angeles, 2009), esp. XXV-XXVI.

¹¹⁴ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, esp. 276-89.

¹¹⁵ Antony Eastmond, *Tamta’s World: The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

around three basic axes. First, he expands on the life of the noblewoman Tamta herself, reconstructing the chronology of her life, her origin and religious context, and her marriages. A handful of documentary and secondary evidence allow for this reconstruction. He then expands on what being a woman at court means in that environment, drawing from examples from across the Byzantine region, focusing on women, who, like Tamta, ‘had neither religions nor family ties to protect her’.¹¹⁶ This allows him to supplement the limited documentary evidence on Tamta with a broader pool of examples from which he can draw an archetype of a Christian woman. Finally, he delves into the monuments, material culture, and construction practices that would have made the context for Tamta, the city of Akhlat. Because so little remains of the city itself Eastmond constructs a composite picture, drawing from the experience of other cities in similar circumstances or at the crossroads of different cultures.

Eastmond reflects, of Tamta, that ‘we must build a picture of her life in different ways: by situating her in the cultures in which she lives and understanding their concerns and expectations, and the positions and choices available to women in them’.¹¹⁷ In the case of this dissertation, we can draw on some of the methodological approaches laid out in that study, although we must also note some significant differences. First, unlike the case of Tamta, we do not focus on one individual in a position of power, but rather multiple individuals with lesser power and relevance. Furthermore, the objects, whose shape and state we would like to argue were at least partly shaped by women, have been well preserved and are extremely well defined.

¹¹⁶ Eastmond, 7.

¹¹⁷ Eastmond, 15.

Therefore, we are not attempting to reconstruct the environment these women might have experienced, but rather to explain the environment they did experience.

Eastmond writes ‘Tamta provides the narrative focus of this book; she is a figure who witnessed and so unites all the different cultures that this book explores’.¹¹⁸ The nature of the women examined in this dissertation was very specific. These were Western princesses of Catholic faith, of Italian and Frankish origin, given in marriage to Despots in Mystras on the basis of a precise geopolitical strategy.¹¹⁹

This research adopts an interdisciplinary analytic approach, for example towards pictorial practices, that represents, in effect, a history of culture, where an image is evaluated to reveal how it incorporates and responds to the context that is responsible for producing it, illuminating the processes, the contexts, the personalities, the histories and the events that surround the object. This aggregate examination of numerous details, when connected in light of a broadened spectrum of considerations and repertoires, allows us to more clearly describe the stratified cultural climate of Mystras. This research pursues a fundamentally historical, cultural approach to art, a *Kulturgeschichte*, which interweaves the cultural values of different objects with the histories of the three Catholic women and other intellectuals at the court, such as Ciriaco d’Ancona (born in Ancona 1391 – died in Cremona ca. 1455) and Georgios Gemistos Plethon.

A capital city’s architecture, design and cultural production are the indices transmitting the agency of the Imperial court. In Mystras, indices of the presence of the wives of the Despots reflect the exogenous agency of the courts they come from,

¹¹⁸ Eastmond, 16.

¹¹⁹ Chrysostomides, ‘Italian women in Greece during the late 14th and early 15th centuries’; Ronchey, ‘Malatesta - Paleologhi: un’alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo’.

for which the imperial court becomes a patient. Therefore, linking both the histories of these women and the artistic production at court to the broader intellectual debates of the fourteenth and fifteenth century helps us recalibrate our understanding of the complexity of the late Palaiologan Era.

I.5 The sources

The sources considered in this dissertation are both visual and textual. Visual sources are architectural elements and frescoes, representing a heterogeneous body of evidence, which in most cases lack any documentation relating to their commission and realization, making their analysis complex. They are drawn from the fortress, the palace complex and churches such as Hagios Demetrios, Hagioi Theodoroi, Hodegetria, Peribleptos, Hagia Sophia, Aï-Giannaki, the Evangelistria, and the Pantanassa, and are introduced in the relevant sections of the following chapters, as well as briefly reviewed in the appendix.¹²⁰ The photographs illustrating and documenting the city, architecture, sculpture, and painting are the result of two survey campaigns conducted in May 2013 and April 2015.¹²¹

Primary sources collected by previous scholars and tied to the history of the Peloponnese are an important source for this study.¹²² The specific documents used from these collections are referenced in this dissertation. There are however some primary textual sources that we investigated directly to complement the visual apparatus.

¹²⁰ See below Appendix 02, 344-356

¹²¹ For the list of monuments surveyed in the April 2015 campaign, see below Appendix 03, 358-361.

¹²² See above footnote n. 3, 1.

Cleophe Malatesti was at the centre of an epistolary exchange (Table 8). Four letters in the Archivio di Stato di Mantova are by Cleophe herself, written to her sister Paola Malatesti Gonzaga in Mantua: the first, on 5 October 1426;¹²³ the second, on 26 January 1428;¹²⁴ the third on 20 March 1428;¹²⁵ the fourth on 18 July 1428.¹²⁶ In these letters Cleophe informs Paola of her condition in Mystras. Replies to these letters by Paola Malatesti Gonzaga have not survived. However, Paola wrote two other letters concerning Cleophe's condition in Mystras: one to Pope Martin V on 22 January 1427.¹²⁷ The other to her sister-in-law Battista di Montefeltro.¹²⁸ The latter does not survive but Battista di Montefeltro, in reply to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga, wrote on 12 February 1427 reporting news she had managed to gather through ambassadors travelling through Mystras.¹²⁹ In the same epistolary exchange, Battista di Montefeltro also wrote to Pope Martin V.¹³⁰ Specific issues with these letters as source material are dealt with later in this thesis.¹³¹

Related to these exchanges between Cleophe and her Italian relatives are also two official deliberations of the Senate of the Venice Republic concerning Cleophe and

¹²³ The original copy of this letter is in the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 128r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607.

¹²⁴ The original copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 145r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 608.

¹²⁵ The original copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 144r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 608.

¹²⁶ The original copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 146r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 609.

¹²⁷ A copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2390, c. 37r and it is published in the documentary appendix Falcioni, 607.

¹²⁸ These primary sources have been studied and published by Anna Falcioni in a 2004 essay. See Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo'. Also by Falcioni on Cleophe see Anna Falcioni, ed., *Le donne di casa Malatesti*, 19 (Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005).

¹²⁹ The letter by Battista da Montefeltro is at the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, Affari in Rimini, busta 1081, n. 54. It is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607–8.

¹³⁰ This letter is not published by Falcioni. It can be found in Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, 189–90.

¹³¹ See below ch. III.2 - The documents, 149–152

her husband Theodore II Palaiologos, in response to a letter written by Pandolfo Malatesti, the Catholic bishop of Patras, Cleophe's brother.¹³² In particular this dissertation focuses on a deliberation on 9 June 1428 where the Senate voted to act in favour of Cleophe and informed her brother Pandolfo Malatesti.¹³³ These documents are considered in the context of the diplomatic exchanges and of the foreign interests of the Papacy and of the Venetian Republic with respect to Byzantine Morea. Another later account of this nexus of interests, examined in this dissertation, is Sigismondo Malatesti's report to the Venetian Doge about the military campaign he was conducting in the Morea against the Ottomans in 1464-1465.¹³⁴

Ciriaco d'Ancona has left us significant primary sources for this research. The diary describing his first visit to Mystras in 1436-1437 is lost, but we have a seventeenth-century printed transcription in his *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvnrniam*.¹³⁵ Later diaries still survive.¹³⁶ From these diaries, we know that Ciriaco transcribed ancient Greek inscriptions and drew antiquities.¹³⁷

¹³² These two deliberations are published along with other deliberations concerning Morea in Sathas, *Μνημεία Ελληνικής ιστορίας. Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge* Tom. I, 186-90 nn. 118-123.

¹³³ Sathas Tom. I, 188 n. 119.

¹³⁴ Giovanni Soranzo, 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in Morea e le vicende del suo dominio.', *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna*, IV, 8 (1918): 211-80 esp. 231 n. 2. The letter by Sigismondo Malatesti was also sent in copy to the Duke of Milan. This copy of letter can be found in Bibliothèque National de France, Paris, *Carte Sforzesche*, Cod. 1590, c. 350 and it is transcribed in Appendice n. 2 in Soranzo, 279-80.

¹³⁵ Ciriaco d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam: Epigramma Iaderae prope maritima Civitatis mulieris, in quo Tubicen ille aequorei Numinis, Triton, suis cum insignibus mira fabrefactoris arte conspicitur* (Roma: C. Moroni, 1654), XXXVII, XXXVIII. As printed in William Lloyd and William Lloyd, *Series chronologica, Olympiadum, Pythiadum, Isthmiadum, Nemeadum, quibus veteres Graeci tempora sua metiebantur; cum nominibus, quot quot inveniri potuerunt, Olympionicarum, & aliorum victorum in ludis, quibus hosce singulos insigniverunt; ad aeras, Urbis conditae, & Nabonassari, (annis regum ex Ptolemaei canone adjectis,) atque etiam ad aeram Christianam vulgarem, accommodata; per Gulielmum Lloyd* (Oxoniae: Theatro Sheldoniano, 1700).

¹³⁶ See Ciriaco d'Ancona, Edward W. Bodnar, and Clive Foss, *Later Travels* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹³⁷ See for instance Ciriaco's drawings of three funeral reliefs can be found in f. 113r in Ma5, Trotti 373, fifteenth c., fols. 101-124, Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana and published in d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, plate VII.

While many of his drawings are lost, some copies are known, such as those made by the architect Giuliano da Sangallo (born in Florence, 1442?, died in Florence, 16 October, 1516) and commented by his son Francesco (born in Florence, 1 March 1494, died in Florence, 17 February, 1576). These are in the *Codex Vaticanus Latinus 4424*, in which Giuliano da Sangallo and his son collected exempla of antiquities from Athens, Corinth and Sparta. In particular, the folio 29r of the codex bears a drawing by Giuliano da Sangallo, with annotations by his son Francesco (Fig. 185A-B). The drawing, along with other ones at folia 28 and 29, was copied from the diaries compiled by Ciriaco during his trip to the Peloponnese.¹³⁸ In the drawing is also annotated the transcription of an inscription discussed in this research.

A further primary source related to Ciriaco and discussed in this dissertation is a drawing found in The *Codex Mutinensis Graecus 144* - Mut. Gr. 144, now in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, which was written and assembled in Mystras between the early forties and the early fifties of the fifteenth century (Fig. 158, Fig. 167 – Fig. 169, Table 10A-B).¹³⁹ The codex was conceived as a collection of texts aimed at group of scholars. It was tailored to the interests of its owner, Demetrios Raul Kabakes, who, over several years, commissioned from Greek scholars in Mystras the transcription of thirty extracts and sections of letters by various authors.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Christian Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reprodotta in fototipia)* (Lipsia: O. Harrassowitz, 1910); Giuliano da Sangallo, *Il libro di Giuliano Da Sangallo: codice Vaticano Barberiniano Latino 4424* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1984); Dario Donetti, 'Le "Antichità greche" di Giuliano da Sangallo: erudizione e rovinismo nel Libro dei Disegni, Codice Barberiniano Latino 4424', in *Les ruines: entre destruction et construction de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Campisano, 2013), 85–93.

¹³⁹ The codex Mut. Gr. 144 in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena (perties":{"formattedCitationdiscussed by Anna Pontani, in Anna Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', *Thesaurismata - Bollettino dell'Istituto Ellenico di Studi Bizantini e Postbizantini di Venezia* 24 (1994): 124–25.

¹⁴⁰ On the paper gatherings forming the codex Mut. Gr. 144 see Giuseppe De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144', *Scrittura e Civiltà* XVIII (1994): 261–62.

Other primary sources are used in this dissertation to examine Cleophe's time at court: Sphrantzes' chronicon reporting Cleophe's death in 1433¹⁴¹ and five funerary compositions written on the occasion of her death.¹⁴² The funerary orations still in existence today are by Georgios Gemistos Plethon;¹⁴³ the future Cardinal Bessarion;¹⁴⁴ the monk Ioannes;¹⁴⁵ Pepagomenos, Cleophe's physician;¹⁴⁶ and Nikephoros Cheilas.¹⁴⁷ Two poems were also written for Cleophe: one by Bessarion,¹⁴⁸ and one by Theodore II Palaiologos.¹⁴⁹

This dissertation also considers an isorhythmic motet composed by Guillaume Dufay (born 1397- died 1474), known by the first line of its lyrics, *Vasilissa ergo gaude*.

We focus on the paper of the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici Misc. 213, fols. 132v-133r, which is compared with the paper on which Cleophe's letters

¹⁴¹ Sphrantzes reports the death of Cleophe on 18 April 1433. See Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, 73 XXI-12.

¹⁴² The monodies by Plethon, Pepagomenos and Cheilas are found in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930 Vol. IV, 144-75. The most comprehensive study of the Greek texts on Cleophe is by Silvia Ronchey. See Silvia Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', in *Bessarione e l'Umanesimo*, ed. Gianfranco Fiaccadori (Napoli: Vivarium, 1994), 47-66.

¹⁴³ Plethon's monody "ἐπὶ τῇ αἰοιδίῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ" is found in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, vol. IV, 161-75. The monody is contained in several codexs. The list of the codexs is in Λάμπρος, 161-2.

¹⁴⁴ The monody "ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρία ἡμῶν, τῇ αἰοιδίῳ καὶ μακαρίτιδι βασιλίσσῃ κυρᾷ Κλεόπῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίνῃ" by the "ἱερομονάχος" Bessarion is transcribed in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 154-60. The monody can be found in Parisinus Graecus 2540 ff. 61r-70r, Bibliothèque National de France, Paris.

¹⁴⁵ The monody "ἐπὶ τῇ αἰοιδίῳ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ ἡμῶν βασιλίσσῃ κυρία Κλεόπῃ" by the monk Ioannes is transcribed in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, vol. IV, 153. The monody can be found in the codex Matriensis. Gr. CXXV vol. XXIX f. 954, Regiae Bibliothecae Matritensis, Madrid.

¹⁴⁶ See transcription, translation into German and comment by Gudrun Schmalzbauer, 'Eine bisher unedierte Monodie auf Kleoppe Palaiologina von Demetrios Pepagomenos', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* XX (1971): 223-40.

¹⁴⁷ The monody "ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρία ἡμῶν, τῇ αἰοιδίῳ καὶ μακαρίτιδι ἰσιλίσσῃ Κλεόπῃ τῇ εὐδιολογίνῃ" by Nikephoros Cheilas is transcribed in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 144-52. The monody can be found in the codex Parisinus Graecus 2540, ff. 71r-81v.

¹⁴⁸ The poem "ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ τῆς μακαρίτιδος βασιλισσῆς κυρᾶς Κλεόπῃς τῆς παλαιολογίνης" by Bessarion is transcribed in Λάμπρος, 176. The poem can be found in the codex Marcianus Graecus 433 f. 48r, Biblioteca Marciana, Venezia.

¹⁴⁹ The poem by Theodore II Palaiologos is in Cod. Marc. Gr. 533, c. 48v edited in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930 Vol. III, 278. The poem is translated in Italian by Silvia Ronchey in Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', 1994, 58.

are written, as well as with the paper of the Codex Mutinensis Graecus 144 - Mut. Gr. 144.¹⁵⁰

In the dissertation we also refer to Byzantine inscriptions found in Mystras and in the region, catalogued by Gabriel Millet.¹⁵¹ Millet was not the first to transcribe inscriptions of course. Others include Abbot Michel Fourmont (born 1690 – died 1746) who in the thirties of the eighteenth century ventured in the Peloponnese to record its major sites and ancient epigraphs on behalf of Louis XV, King of France.¹⁵² Fourmont transcribed the inscriptions found in Sparta and Mystras. In his notebooks we find drawings that are examined in this dissertation. He conducted a survey of Mystras in 1729-30. At folio 50 of the Ms. Gr. 853 in the Bibliothèque National de France, Fourmont drew a view of a city, which in this dissertation I identify as Mystras as seen from the Eurotas River valley while looking towards northwest (Fig. 310, Fig. 311).¹⁵³ In another manuscript we find another inscription examined in this dissertation (Fig. 289 – Fig. 291).¹⁵⁴

Finally, we consider historical accounts of Venetian travellers to Morea to gain insight in the multicultural dimensions of the capital. We use accounts by the

¹⁵⁰ David Fallows, *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Canon. Misc. 213*, vol. v. 1, Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Music in Facsimile ; v. 1 (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10 fig. 12.

¹⁵¹ Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)'; Millet, 'Inscriptions inédites de Mistra'.

¹⁵² On Michel Fourmont and his 1729-30 travels in Greece and the Peloponnese see Henri Auguste Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), vol. 1, 537-662; Ian Macgregor Morris, 'Liars, Eccentrics and Visionaries: Early Travellers to Sparta and the Birth of Laconian Archaeology', *British School at Athens Studies* 16 (2009): 387-95. On the controversy and attributions related to some of his findings see Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', esp. 293-96.

¹⁵³ Michel Fourmont, *Supplément grec 853*, [manuscript, papier. - 51 fol. - Grand format], Bibliothèque National de France, fol. 50

¹⁵⁴ See manuscript by Fourmont in Bibliothèque National de France Suppl. Gr., 855 (n. 235), f. 93v. The finding is reported also in Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 137-38. For a transcription and interpretation see Millet, 137-38; Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, 286 n. 9.

Venetian cosmographer Vincenzo Coronelli (born in Venice, 16 August 1650 – died in Venice, 9 December, 1718).¹⁵⁵ Coronelli describes Mystras in the context of the conquest of the city by the Venetians. We also consider an account by Venetian historian Pietro Garzoni (born in Venice, 1 December 1645 – died in Venice, 24 February 1735), the *History of the Venice Republic* (1720), who reports on the war and negotiations between the Venetians and the Ottomans over possession of the city of Mystras in 1687.¹⁵⁶ Given the roles of both writers, their descriptions are of the Morea as a territory of conquest for Venice.

¹⁵⁵ Vincenzo Coronelli, 'Sparta hoggidi Misitra' in Vincenzo Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione* (Venice, 1686). See also the English edition of Vincenzo Coronelli, *An Historical and Geographical Account of the Morea, Negropont, and the Maritime Places, as Far as Thessalonica: Illustrated with 42 Maps of the Countries, Plains, and Draughts of the Cities, Towns and Fortifications* (London: Matth. Gillyflower; W. Canning, 1687).

¹⁵⁶ See 'Libro Quinto', Pietro Garzoni, *Istoria della Repubblica di Venezia in tempo della sacra lega contra Maometto IV., e tre suoi successori gran Sultani de' Turchi, (ove insieme narrasi la guerra per la successione delle Spagne al Re Carlo II.)* (Venezia: Gio. Manfrè, 1720), 213–14, 262–63.

I.6 Structure of the dissertation

After this introduction, the structure of the dissertation is as follows.

Chapter II. Women in Mystras: patrons, subjects and mediators

Scholarly literature mostly sees these women as passive elements within diplomatic relations, almost imperial commodities. The chapter shows that they embodied several roles at court and, while obscured by major historical narratives, they left multiple indices of their agency or of their courts of origin. The uniqueness that the literature recognizes in the art and architecture of Mystras was not simply a matter of importing standards, but is linked to the integration of the agency of these women.

Details from representations of female costume in donor and funerary portraits and in depictions of female characters in images from the *life* of the Virgin — such as women in the scene of the Birth of Virgin in Hagia Sophia — are analysed in relation to the three wives of the Despots, and to donor portraits in the Peribleptos, two female donors in the church of Aï-Giannaki, as well as to portraits found in centres where similar multicultural factors were in place and where known female donors were active during the late Byzantine period.¹⁵⁷ Further evidence comes from the fashion and material culture found in burials excavated in chapels to the west of Hagia Sophia in Mystras. All these visual elements are considered also in relation to the depiction of fashion in the courts of origins of the wives of the despot and to the

¹⁵⁷ For recent studies on female patronage, see Theis, Mullett, and Grünbart, *Female founders in Byzantium & beyond: an international colloquium : September 23-25, 2008, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, University of Vienna*.

trade of precious fabrics. In order to complement the discussion, male costumes depicted in Mystras are also considered.

The chapter also discusses evidence of direct patronage by these women. In the chapter, we consider elements such as an architrave, now in the Museum of Mystras, the Florentine fleur-de-lis motif, linked here to Bartholomea Acciaiuoli, and also seen carved on the internal decoration of the Peribleptos, a church whose foundation is tied to Isabelle de Lusignan. These details are read as indices supporting the main thesis of this research, which points to the nature of the cultural agency and legacy of the wives of the despots. These sculptural elements are discussed in relation to epigraphic evidence found in Laconia and in bordering regions and in relation to epigraphic, dedicatory, coinage and emblem evidence in Italian and Cypriot contexts.

Chapter III. Cleophe and Ciriaco, cultural ambassadors at the court of Mystras

A particularly close analysis is then dedicated to the letters by Cleophe Malatesti to her sister Paola Malatesti Gonzaga in Mantua. These letters and the network of individuals linked to them, show how Cleophe was a diplomatic vehicle between courts, and also supported intellectual exchanges. Cleophe's role is related to the exchanges between prominent scholars of the fifteenth century, Georgios Gemistos Plethon and Ciriaco d'Ancona, at the court of Mystras as well as of Rimini, Cleophe's court of origin. In particular the chapter analyses the intellectual and visual interest for the description and depiction of virtues, as documented in the manuscripts linked to Ciriaco's visits at the court of Mystras — in particular a drawing of an elephant on the manuscript *Mut. Gr. 144* — and in the discussion of

Cleophe's virtues in her funerary oration by Georgios Gemistos Plethon. Other funerary orations written for her will also be discussed.

Chapter IV. Visual antiquarianism in Mystras

In this chapter, we broaden our view and examine the way in which intellectuals linked to the women's courts of origin interacted with Mystras. This chapter focuses on the connection between the city of Mystras, Italian courts, and interest in antiquity, introducing a framework for its treatment in this research, based on the proximity between Mystras and ancient Sparta.

The chapter explores the idea that knowledge is also transmitted through objects and visual exempla from the past. It examines the iconographic depiction of visual antiquarianism by considering fresco details and the use of *spolia* in Hagios Demetrios, Hagia Sophia, and the Pantanassa. The intellectual role of Plethon and of Ciriaco is also analysed in some detail. In particular, the interest in the idea of Sparta and its iconography is epitomised by Ciriaco d'Ancona who visited its ancient ruins during his visit to Mystras.

The common interest in *exempla* linked to Sparta is read as an intellectual interest shared by both Byzantine and Italian intellectuals active in the fifteenth century. In this context, the rendition of the backdrop of the scene of the Annunciation in the church of the Pantanassa in Mystras, unique in the late Byzantine depiction of the scene in the Morea region, is read as a visual expression of similar antiquarian interests.

Chapter V. Secondary agency in the built environment

The fifth chapter considers Mystras as a political project in the broader geopolitical context, and examines spatial and design solutions found in the palace, square, religious infrastructure and urbanization of Mystras, and discusses how they can be better understood when compared to equivalent solutions found in the context of the geographical origins of the three women. The chapter will discuss, amongst others: the development of the palace complex and of the surrounding urbanization, comparing them with similar developments in Italy; the construction of the *katholikon* of the Pantanassa in relation to the aristocratic elites of the Despotate and individuals such as Ioannes Phrangopoulos, protostrator to the Byzantine Despots of Morea between 1428 and 1443 and part of the Byzantine delegation to the Council of Ferrara-Florence.

The chapter also analyses the built environment and the perception of Mystras held by other patrons, travellers and individuals who were either linked to the three Catholic wives, or visited the region in the centuries after the surrender to the Ottomans because of economic or cultural interests linked to, and informed by, the wives of the Byzantine Despots. It includes: the accounts by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesti, Cleophe's cousin, who in 1464 conducted a military campaign to reconquer Mystras along with Italian artefacts referencing Byzantium relating to politics involved in the regain of the Morea under the lead of Pope Pius II Piccolomini, such as the Duchy of Milan, the *signorie* of Este and Rimini as well as the Republic of Florence and of Venice such as the sculptures of Eastern merchants in the Campo dei Mori in Venice; the perception, the accounts and the public commissions such as the triumphal arch by Andrea Tirali celebrating the Doge

Francesco Morosini and the Poleponnesiac War of 1685-87 – related to Mystras and the Morea of seventeenth century Venetian diplomats and officials, such as Coronelli; and the eighteenth-century survey campaign by Michel Fourmont.

The final chapter presents the **Conclusions** that can be drawn from this research.

II Women in Mystras: patrons, subjects and mediators

II.1 Women portraits in Mystras

II.1.a Depicted Women in Byzantium in the late period

We begin by considering the depiction of notable female individuals of the late Byzantine period, either linked to the imperial family or part of the aristocracy, and well documented in written sources. A significant secondary literature has addressed the complex issue of relating written records and visual sources.¹ The depiction of women is a recurrent feature of frescoed painting in the churches of Mystras. In itself this is not an original feature: the presence of female individuals is a norm in religious iconography of the Christian world.

In Mystras, churches share with those in other Byzantine centres of the late Period the fact that the depiction of women is part of a more articulated and richly composed pictorial programme. The frescoes dating to this period, reveal ‘a preference for the depiction of ‘realistic’ details and genre themes incorporated in expanded narrative cycles’.² The monumental frescoes of Mystras are enriched with visual details of costumes, textiles, objects, hair styles, head decorations, jewelleryes

¹ Some of the significant studies that inform the perspective in this dissertation include Leslie Brubaker, ‘Memories of Helena: Patterns in Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries’, in *Women, Men and Eunuchs. Gender in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 52–75; Robert F. Taft, ‘Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When-And Why?’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998): 27–87; Gerstel, ‘Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium’; Gerstel, ‘Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea’; Ioli Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women and Their World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2003); Antony Eastmond, ‘Art and Frontiers between Byzantium and the Caucasus’, in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New York; London: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 154–169; Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Female Church Founders’; Lioba Theis, Margaret Mullett, and Michael Grünbart, eds., *Female Founders in Byzantium & beyond: An International Colloquium : September 23-25, 2008, Institut Für Kunstgeschichte, University of Vienna* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014); Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium*; Eastmond, *Tamta’s World*.

² Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 5.

and emblems, those ‘secular artefacts (*realia*)’,³ which, according to Maria Parani, generally supplement our understanding of the ‘reality of the medieval Byzantine material culture’,⁴ and, particularly for this study, signify the agency of women at the court of Mystras in the late Byzantine period, and, amongst them, the wives of the Byzantine Despots of Morea.

In the context of Christian art, women appear in two main iconographical categories: first, as specific individuals in donor and funerary portraits, following a tradition that is linked to, and originates from, late antique practices of notable women acting as patrons, ultimately aiming to ‘champion marriage, motherhood and traditional family values’ and associating Imperial and aristocratic women with the ‘virtues of marital concord’;⁵ second, as generic characters alongside men, in scenes illustrating episodes of the Old or New Testament, the lives of Saints, Christ and the Theotokos. The latter do not portray specific individuals and often offer the opportunity to depict common women in daily activities.⁶ However, just as a funerary portrait or the image of a founder reflects the social role of that particular person, so characters in group depictions show – depending on the iconography – their role. Several examples of both categories can be found in the frescoed and stone decorations of the churches of Mystras.

³ Parani, 1.

⁴ Parani, 1.

⁵ Brubaker, ‘Memories of Helena: Patterns in Imperial Female Matronage in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries’, 53. On the strategy of Imperial women associating themselves with the foundation and refoundation of buildings in Constantinople, see Liz James, ‘Making a Name: Reputation and Imperial Founding and Refounding in Constantinople’, in *Female Founders in Byzantium & Beyond* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 63–72.

⁶ Ioli Kalavrezou, ‘Women in the Visual Record of Byzantium’, in *Byzantine Women and Their World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2003), 13–21.

II.1.b Women portrayed as donors and as deceased

The first category of renditions is that of patrons or funerary portraits. A significant example in Mystras is the double portrait in the Church of Ai-Giannaki (Fig. 4). Ai-Giannaki is a small church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, with a longitudinal nave divided from the three apses by a masonry *templon*. The church has two accessing doors, on the north and south side, and is now covered by a barrel vault, reconstructed in 1952. On the west side is an ossuary, and a tomb is located in front of the north entrance (Table 46).⁷ The interior frescoed decoration dates to the third quarter of the fourteenth century, according to Nikolaos Drandakes' comparative formal analysis with the frescoes of Peribleptos and the south portico of the Hodegetria.⁸ This dating has been recently challenged by Titos Papamastorakis, who suggests dating it to the end of the first quarter of the fourteenth century.⁹

On the west side of the nave, the walls are decorated with five blind arches that have only decorative function: three on the west wall, two on the south and north wall respectively. The one to the south, next to the entrance, is decorated with a frescoed representation of the Virgin holding an infant Christ in her arms and of the donors. On the opposite wall, to the north, is an angelic figure in military garments. In the other blind arches, on the west wall, are full body depictions of saints, amongst them

⁷ Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, 230-32.

⁸ Δρανδάκης, 'Ο Άϊ-Γιαννάκης τοῦ Μυστρά'. Drandakes suggests this dating for the decoration of the church based on previous studies on its interiors, see Δρανδάκης, 82 nn. 117-21.

⁹ Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras', 389.

Hagios Nikon, and a hierarch.¹⁰ Above the south arch is a depiction of the Last Supper, while above is the Incredulity of Saint Thomas. The decorative programme in the western portion of the *naos* has a funerary connotation (Table 46 Fig. 98).

The donors on the blind arch on the south are depicted at each side of the Virgin: On the left-hand side is a laywoman, standing with arms crossed in front of her torso, wearing a dress, her head covered by a veil also covering her shoulders; in front of her is another woman, smaller, also with her arms crossed; below, a kneeling young man with hands stretched out in the act of praying; on the right-hand side of the Virgin is another woman, portrayed as a nun, with hands crossed in front of her torso (Fig. 4). According to Millet, the woman on the right-hand side is the same person as the one on the left.¹¹ This double portrait follows a convention seen elsewhere. For example, in Tomb D, the tomb of Mikael Tornikes and his wife, in the funerary chapel of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople, the two individuals are represented as praying on each side of the Virgin (Fig. 5).¹² They too are depicted as laymen but also as monk and nun respectively, in the intrados of the *arcosolium*. These three double portraits belong to a similar funerary tradition in which the deceased are shown wearing both a civil dress and a monastic one, the latter being ‘called “robes of incorruption,” put on in preparation for eternity’, hence remarking to their gathered communities how the civil nature of their lives transferred to the religious one.¹³

¹⁰ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, 18-9 pl. 35 schéma XXIII-IV; Δρανδάκης, ‘Ο Ἀϊ-Γιαννάκης τοῦ Μυστρά’, 64–67, 64 fig. 7.

¹¹ Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, 131–32.

¹² Paul Atkins Underwood, ed., *The Kariye Djami* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1966, 1975), vol. I pp. 269–70, 276–80, figs. 537, 538 ; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 337 cat. n. 61.

¹³ Robert Ousterhout, ‘Temporal Structuring in the Chora Parekklesion’, *Gesta* 34, no. 1 (1995): 63–76, esp. 73–4 and 76 n. 34. The theme linked to the “robes of incorruption” is borrowed by Ousterhout from Kathleen Corrigan, ‘Text and Image on an Icon of the Crucifixion at Mount Sinai’, in *The*

According to Sarah Brooks, the repertoire of funerary portraits related to tombs was limited. If the dedicatee had died before the tomb celebrating her memory had been built, then she would have been represented with her arms crossed in front of her chest.¹⁴ An example of this convention, albeit of a simple funerary portrait rather than a patron portrait, can be seen in the tomb fresco depicting Maria Synadene, on the west façade of the Church of the Anastasis in the Monastery of Christ the Saviour in Berroia (Fig. 6). If, on the other hand, the dedicatee was alive at the time of construction, she would have been represented in the act of praying.¹⁵ According to Brooks, an example of this second iconography is the tomb of an unidentified laywoman in the Church of the Myrelaion in Constantinople (Fig. 7).¹⁶

In the fresco in Aï-Giannaki, in front of the laywoman, the two smaller figures are recognized in the literature as her children: the young woman is standing and dressed with a lay costume and head veil, while the kneeling figure is dressed with a long sleeved, long tunic, which, although hard to read because of damage, appears to be a young male's costume. Around the heads of the standing laywoman and of the nun is an inscription, naming this woman as Kale Kabalasea, renamed Kaleneke Monake as nun, and, as Dufrenne pointed out, was the founder.¹⁷ The name of the daughter is inscribed as Anna Laskarina. Kale Kabalasea was either married to a member of the

Sacred Image East and West, ed. Robert Ousterhout and Leslie Brubaker (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 45–62.

¹⁴ Sarah T. Brooks, ed., *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261-1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture* / Edited by Sarah T. Brooks. (New York ; London: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 241–42, 242 n. 53; Brooks, 'Women's Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium', 321.

¹⁵ Cecil L. Striker, *The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in Istanbul* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1981), esp. 30-1 and figg. 60-4; Brooks, 'Women's Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium', 321–22.

¹⁶ Brooks, 'Women's Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium', 323–24.

¹⁷ Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 132.

important Laskaris family, thus giving her daughter her father's name, or her daughter married a member of the Laskaris family herself. Manuel Laskaris Chatzikes is portrayed in a funerary portrait in the narthex of the Pantanassa (Fig. 8).¹⁸ Despite the plain clothes used for portraying them,¹⁹ we can deduce that these women had some notable connections. The name of the boy, Theodoros Hodegitrianos, could have meant that either he had entered the monastery or was destined for monastic life. While not possible to define specific chronological information for these characters, it is supposed that they are fourteenth-century figures.²⁰ The fresco refers to Kabalasea's powerful background.

This fresco follows conventions associated with foundational acts of the fourteenth century, common across late Byzantine society, as indicated by the formula with which she is presented. The inscription says 'κυρα καλη η καβαλασεα συν τοις τεκνοις αυτης', 'kyra (the lady) Kale Kabalasea with her children', which is also the formula used in the inscriptions in the church of St George at Kometades in Sphakia 1313-14, where this same formula is used to commemorate widows,²¹ and which indicates that at some point she had been the head of her family.²² 'The ability of widows to participate in church foundation [...] reflected the strong juridical rites of widows in Byzantium and their critical positions within families where they served, on occasion, as heads of households'.²³ She was a widow, presented alone with

¹⁸ Millet, 138–39. On the portrait of Manuel Laskaris Chatzikes, see Ασπρά-Βαρδαβάκη and Εμμανουήλ, *Η Μονή της Παντάνασσας στον Μυστρά: Οι τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αιώνα*, esp. 206–11.

¹⁹ Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra', 518; Δρανδάκης, 'Ο Άϊ-Γιαννάκης του Μυστρά', 78.

²⁰ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, 18.

²¹ Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 'Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium', 206, 206 n. 59.

²² Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 206.

²³ Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 195.

children and referred to by the appellative *kyra*, which, as shown by Gerstel refers to widows.²⁴

Women are remembered in a number of ways in inscriptions and pictorial programmes, reminding us that indexing of female agency was not uncommon, from naming individuals in an inscribed list of contributors to the foundation of a church, to their representation in funerary iconography – as nuns or widowed heads of a family, such as the one seen in Mystras. For example, as nun, Kabalasea takes the name of Kaleneke. Another woman, Kallinike, is the last of 27 registered names of the villagers, who contributed to the construction in 1278 of the rural church of the Archangel Michael in Polemitas in the Mani peninsula.²⁵ Another example where women are acknowledged as members of a collective agency in the donation of a church is in the church of St George of Longanikos, where Gerstel and Talbot point out an inscription of 1374-75 of the donors, where female members of the family – sisters, mothers of the founder, all nuns – are remembered.²⁶ When women are represented as founders, as in the case of Ai-Giannaki in Mystras, they can be represented with iconography also used to represent male donors. A particularly indicative comparison for the portrait of Kale Kabalasea is a donor portrait in Longanikos, where the founder of the church of Panagia Koimesis is represented with his son as the head of a family, in the same iconographic composition (Fig. 9).²⁷ Another example is the act of donation seen in the chapel of Hagia Triada, in Psinthos in Rhodes, referred to by Gerstel, where the founder is represented as a

²⁴ Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, 199.

²⁵ Sharon E. J. Gerstel and Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Nuns in the Byzantine Countryside', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 27 (2006): 481–90, esp. 483-84.

²⁶ Gerstel and Talbot, 484.

²⁷ Olympia Chassoura, *Les peintures murales byzantines des églises de Longanikos, Laconie* (Athènes: sn, 2002), esp. 219-23.

woman – Kataphyge Alexaina – in the act of donating a church to Christ (Fig. 10).²⁸ The fresco is dated 1407-08, the late period, and the woman is represented as a nun who donates a church as an act of commemoration of her husband. She was wife, mother, widow and nun, providing another example of female agency – in the context of a village – where she or the children remember her in the act of donating the church.

So far, we have considered commemorations of lay and noble women not directly linked to an imperial context. The act of supporting the foundation or re-foundation of buildings is a *topos*, which women of noble or imperial family used to establish a public reputation of virtue. This is true from the early period, for example in the case of Anicia Juliana in Saint Polyeuktos, to the case Nun Melane of the late period.²⁹ An important case to consider at the end of the thirteen century is that of Maria Palaiologina, the illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos, known, when she became a nun, as Melane. She had been sent to Tabriz to marry the Mongol khan Abaga. In 1282, once widowed, she returned to Constantinople and become patron of the Theotokos Panagiotissa monastery, also known as the Theotokos Panagia Mougliotissa.³⁰ She also donated valuable textiles and books to the monastery of the Christ in Chora in Constantinople, where she is portrayed in a mosaic dating to 1316-21, on the lower right corner, below the depiction of the Deesis in the south bay of

²⁸ Gerstel and Talbot, 'Nuns in the Byzantine Countryside', 486; Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium*, 70.

²⁹ James, 'Making a Name: Reputation and Imperial Founding and Refounding in Constantinople'.

³⁰ Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Female Patronage in the Palaiologan Era', in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 259–74, esp. 272.

the esonarthex of the Chora *katholikon*,³¹ and commemorated as “the Lady of the Mongols, Melane the nun”.³²

In the Georgian context, Eastmond has studied the images of Queen T’amar (1184-1213).³³ In the Church of the Dormition in Vardzia, Queen T’amar is shown holding a model of the church, in the act of donating it (Fig. 11). On the wall opposite her is an image of Saint Nino, the national Saint who brought Christianity to Georgia. This provides a link between Queen T’amar and the iconography of virtuous female saints, such as Saint Mary of Egypt or Saint Nino, which expresses her virtues and her role as a ruler through iconographic correspondences.³⁴ Indeed, a similar game plays out in the fresco in Aï-Giannaki in Mystras, where the founder is portrayed with her children in one blind arch, surrounded by portraits of other saints in the other arches, and, in front of her, is an angel in military costume, presumably an archangel, implying defence and protection.

Another example is that of Simonis Palaiologina, daughter of Andronikos II Palaiologos, who is represented in the church of the monastery of Gračanica, in an underside of an arch in the inner narthex of the *naos* (Fig. 12). She was sent as wife

³¹ Robert G. Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies ; 25 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1987). esp. 96-100; Alice-Mary Maffry Talbot, ‘Building Activity in Constantinople under Andronikos II: The Role of Women Patrons in the Construction and Restoration of Monasteries’, in *Byzantine Constantinople*, ed. Nevra Necipoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 329–43, esp. 334-35.

³² ‘ἡ κυρᾷ τῶν / Μουγουλίων Μελάνη ἡ / μοναχὴ’, as transcribed in Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, vol. I, 45. While unproven, the identification of Melane with Maria Palaiologina is discussed in Steven Runciman, ‘The ladies of the Mongols’, in *Εἰς μνήμην Κ. Ἀμάντου, 1874-1960* (Αθήναι: τυπ. Μηνά Μυρτίδη, 1960), 46–53. Also discussed in Eastmond, ‘Art and Frontiers between Byzantium and the Caucasus’, esp. 162-63; Brooks, *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, esp. 232.

³³ Antony Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), esp. 99-124.

³⁴ Eastmond, 119–21.

to Stefan Uroš II Milutin, king of Serbia from 1282 to 1321.³⁵ On one side of the representation is King Milutin, in the act of donating the church, and on the other side is Simonis in regal garments. This choice of representation refers to the particular political context of her marriage against her will to a much older man, as recounted by Gregoras.³⁶ Although we have historical indications of this – after all she was sent to marry at a very young age – she is represented with imperial ‘youthful sanctity’, which contributes to the authority of the dynastic link between the Serbian king and the emperor.³⁷ As analysed by Eastmond, this example underscores that women’s representations are indices of agency, of social relations, that capture the historical and diplomatic role they played in a broader context.

In the Byzantine context, when women appear as donors along with their husbands, most of the time the latter have an official role within the imperial court. In the thirteenth century, this is also true, for example, in the context of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, where we find the dedicatory panel in the church of Saint George near the village of Belizırma in the Ihlara gorge (Fig. 13).³⁸ In the panel we see Saint George, to whom the church is dedicated. On the right, is the Christian woman T’amar, Gurjı Khatun, daughter of Queen Rusudan (r.1223 – 1245), and granddaughter of Queen T’amar, mentioned above. This is her last recorded act. She is depicted holding the

³⁵ Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady*, 57–58, 58 n. 30.

³⁶ Antony Eastmond, ‘Diplomatic Gifts: Women and Art as Imperial Commodities in the 13th Century’, in *Liquid & Multiple: Individuals & Identities in the Thirteenth-Century Aegean*, ed. Guillaume Saint-Guillain and Dionysios Ch. Stathakopoulos (Paris: ACHCByz, 2012), 105–33, esp. 129–33; Gregoras, Liber VIII I.5 in Nikephoros Gregoras, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia: graece et Latine*, ed. Ludovicus Schopenus and Immanuel Bekker (Bonnae: Weber, 1829), vol. I, 287–88.

³⁷ Eastmond, ‘Diplomatic Gifts: Women and Art as Imperial Commodities in the 13th Century’, 132–33.

³⁸ Nicole Thierry and Jean Michel Thierry, *Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce, région du Hasan Dagi* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1963), 201–13; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: le programme iconographique de l’abside et de ses abords* (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1991), 318–19.

model of the church she commissioned, which, along with the inscription, makes it clear she was the main patron behind the church. On the left is her third husband, Basil Giagoupes, the Christian general of the Seljuk Sultan Mas'ud II (1283–1305). This choice of representation in a small Christian church reflects a complex agency, which captures her and her husbands' identity as Christians, signalling her notable background as the primary initiator of the donation, but where her husband's role is acknowledged with his representation in an official Seljuk garment.³⁹

We now turn to another portrait that provides further evidence of how the depiction of women in Mystras followed a well-established seam in the art of the late period. In the south portico of the church of the Hodegetria, a portico that was closed and transformed into a chapel with a funerary connotation, there are several burials (Table 32 Fig51A-C).⁴⁰ On the west wall, in an arcosolium, below the frescoes with the cycle of the Dormition of the Virgin, is a funerary portrait placed over a burial site (Fig. 14). At the centre of the composition is a Virgin holding Christ. To the left, a man is portrayed with hands extended in prayer, as is the woman to the right.

The portrait is a funerary one, representing a noble man called Kaniotes and his wife.⁴¹ His title, which is only partially visible in the inscription, is *skouterios*, an officer who bore the emperor's emblem and shield during the *prokypsis* and

³⁹ Eastmond, 'Art and Frontiers between Byzantium and the Caucasus', 167; Nota Karamaouna, Nilüfer Peker, and Tolga Uyar, 'Female Donors in Thirteenth-Century Wall Painting in Cappadocia: An Overview', in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond* (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 231–42, esp. 239–42.

⁴⁰ Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras'.

⁴¹ Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 119–20.

ceremonial processions.⁴² He is wearing a red caftan, with yellow-damasked decoration, and a yellow and red rounded hat, a *skaranikon*, adorned with the representation of an imperial figure (Fig. 15C).⁴³ The hat is similar to that of Alexios Apokaukos, who was the *parakoimomenos*, officer of the imperial chamber for emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, and who, in his donor portrait for the manuscript containing the writings of Hippocrates, is shown wearing a *skaranikon* decorated with an image of the emperor (Fig. 16).⁴⁴ Similarly, the *megas stratopedarches* Johannes Synadenos, in the typikon for the monastery of Our Lady of Certain Hope [Lincoln College, Oxford (Ms. Gr. 35, f.2r)], is wearing a similar *skaranikon* (Fig. 17).⁴⁵ The *skaranikon* is an attribute particular to the rank of Grand Duke. This type of hat is described by the Pseudo-Kodinos, and is a clear indication of the great relevance of these individuals at court.⁴⁶

The man's caftan is closed by buttons that run the length of the garment, and is held in place at the waist by a belt, in which is inserted a white handkerchief embroidered with red motifs (Fig. 15C). The woman is wearing a full-length red garment, decorated with yellow textile trim that runs along the front and the sides, and a veil covering her head (Fig. 15A). The garment is closed on the front with buttons, decorated with pearls – a fashion detail revealing an individual of significant

⁴² 'Skouterios - Oxford Reference', accessed 15 September 2017, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-5014>. For a discussion on the title, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 301–6.

⁴³ For a discussion on the forms, materials and uses of the *skaranikon* by different officials of the late Byzantine court, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 332–36 and 465–67 Table V.

⁴⁴ Helen C. Evans, ed., *Byzantium, Faith and Power (1261–1557)* (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven Conn, 2004), 26–7 cat. n. 2.

⁴⁵ Irmgard Hutter, 'Die Geschichte des Lincoln College Typikons', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 45 (1995): 79–114, esp. 82; Cecily J. Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* (Cambridge, UK; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. 10–13.

⁴⁶ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 156 vv. 3–6, 160 vv. 14–15, 332–33.

standing – and visible in the lower part of the central yellow band (Fig. 15B). Below the thin, long sleeves of this garment, a decoration is visible around the wrists of the same colour as the yellow bands of the garment, which might be either a bracelet or the decoration of the tunic worn below the outer garment (Fig. 15A).⁴⁷ The dating of the paintings in this chapel is thought to be either from around the twenties of the fourteenth century or from after 1366.⁴⁸

The man was clearly recognized at the imperial court, so the woman was the wife of an important officer of the empire. Focusing on the representation of the woman, we find a number of other funerary portraits with significant similarities. For example, the fresco of Tomb C of the south funerary chapel in the Church of Christ in Chora, Constantinople, has four individuals, one man and three women, all standing with their arms stretched in supplication (Fig. 18).⁴⁹ Maria Parani suggests that the third woman from the left is wearing a green dress with floral decorations in yellow. On top of that she is wearing a red elaborate mantle decorated with medallions, bearing the monogram of two families, the Palaiologoi and the Asan.⁵⁰ Despite not knowing who these particular individuals are, we understand them to be members of a family of very high standing, likely connected to the imperial family. Similarly, Tomb F in the Chora depicts an unknown man, child, and woman, and while the top part of the fresco is destroyed, the woman is wearing a blue dress with floral motifs, decorated at its hem with gems, on top of which she is wearing a red mantle, embroidered with monograms of the Palaiologoi, Dermokaites, and Asan (Fig. 19). The red over-

⁴⁷ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 335-36 cat. n. 55.

⁴⁸ Regarding issues of dating, see Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras', esp. 389.

⁴⁹ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, Vol. I, 272-6, Vol. III pls. 534-6.

⁵⁰ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 337.

garment has golden hems decorated with gems and pearls.⁵¹ While the composition is different, we can see the similarities between the portrait in Mystras and the Constantinopolitan tombs of the Chora.

All these examples provide a context for the representations found in Mystras.

Clearly, the example of Ai-Giannaki shows that, in the Despotate capital, women of calibre are represented within a well-established tradition of indexing female agency, rooted in a model of Christian integrity: women who, after marriage, take on a role as patrons of the community and are exemplary of virtue. The examples from imperial context, such as the one in the Hodegetria, provide indices of an altogether different type of agency though, one that reflects a broader context for the social relations in which the woman is embedded, and that reflect her, and her husband's, institutional role. The Hodegetria was part of the Brontocheion monastery, a notable institution that received important privileges from Emperors Andronikos II and Michael IX Palaiologoi, and whose founder, the Abbot Pachomios, was the *protosynkellos* for the patriarch in the Peloponnese.⁵² So the funerary portrait becomes a social agent itself, reinforcing the link of the monastic community to the imperial court.

This distinction in the indices of agency becomes important in examining one more example of a donor portrait from Mystras, in the church of the Peribleptos, which we will examine later.⁵³ There, we will see that the index relays the agency of a woman of great importance representing an institutional context. The woman in the

⁵¹ Parani, 338.

⁵² Gerstel, 'The Morea', 337–48.

⁵³ See below II.2.a - The double portrait in the Peribleptos, 75-90.

Peribleptos is not a nun, and is presented with her husband in the act of donating the church, but his role and their names are not preserved as part of the depiction. A possible explanation for these traits will be developed later in the chapter, as we introduce the Latin *basilissai*. Before doing so, we turn to another form of rendering women.

II.1.c Women portrayed in Scenes of the Virgin or Christ

In the second type of rendition of women in frescoes in Mystras, they appear as part of a group attending events in the lives of Christ, the Virgin or of a Saint. These renditions, while not the main focus of this study, do provide some comparative material to the previous analysis of individual women in donor and funerary portraits.

This typology of frescoes provides information on a spectrum of visual possibilities used to address the female *persona* in the context of the Despotate of Morea. The examples are several, but the scene of the Birth of the Virgin, in particular, reveals important insights regarding indices of agency from female patrons. This episode from the life of the Virgin conveys issues related to femininity in society. In Mystras it is depicted in three of the churches, and dating from different times: in Hagios Demetrios with a scene from the late thirteenth century (Fig. 20, Table 24 Fig. 15), in Hagia Sophia from the third quarter of the fourteenth century (Fig. 21), and in the Peribleptos from the last quarter of the fourteenth century (Fig. 22, Table 29 Fig. 37, Table 29 Fig. 38).

The scene painted in the north aisle of the church Hagios Demetrios (Fig. 20), dating to the late thirteenth century, is generic, a schematic rendition of the backdrop and with little articulation of the design of the fictional architecture and furniture. The composition takes into account only the main figures accompanying Saint Anne and the infant Virgin: three women appear on the second plane while bearing offerings to Saint Anne, and a woman is shown seated, holding a spindle, on the same plane of Saint Anne and the Virgin. This rendition recalls the late thirteenth-century composition in the Peribleptos in Ohrid (Fig. 23).⁵⁴ The two scenes are almost contemporary and, in both, the three women are portrayed behind a wall, with similar poses and almost identical costumes: the one on the left proceeds with her arms crossed in front of the torso, the one in the middle carries a covered dish, and the one on the right is holding a *flabellum*. The painters respond to established conventions for the depiction of the Birth of the Virgin, following similar models based on iconographic standards that Lafontaine-Dosogne traces back to those employed in the tenth-century illumination of the scene in the *Menologium Basilii II* at fol. 22 of the codex *Vat. Gr. 1613* (Fig. 24).⁵⁵

The same scene is also painted in the Peribleptos and in the southeast chapel in Hagia Sophia, and in both it contains more visual information (Fig. 21, Table 27 Fig. 30, Fig. 22). While in Hagios Demetrios elements such as the bed of Saint Anne or the crib for the infant Virgin do not reveal a particular interest for detail, they are expressed with much more detail in the cases of both the Peribleptos and Hagia

⁵⁴ For secondary literature on the Church of the Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid, see Ivan Drpić, 'The Patron's "I": Art, Selfhood, and the Later Byzantine Dedicatory Epigram', *Speculum* 89, no. 4 (2014): 895–935, esp. 903 n. 13.

⁵⁵ Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire byzantin et en Occident*, II vols (Bruxelles: Académie Royale de Belgique, 1964), esp. vol. I, 92. For a survey on the iconography of the scene of the Birth of the Virgin, see Lafontaine-Dosogne, 89–121.

Sophia. In both, the iconographic solutions employ greater detail in rendering the background architecture, the number of women in the scene and their costumes. The three women carrying goods to Saint Anne are more characterised, with richly decorated costumes and elaborate head wears that hold in place a full-length body veil opened to the front and covering the back of the figures. In the case of the Peribleptos, the women without headpiece, attending to Saint Anne or the infant Virgin, or the one witnessing the scene from the fictional architecture in the background, all wear identical earrings (Fig. 190A-C). The shape of these earrings recalls two pairs of gold earrings found in graves in Drustar, in Bulgaria (Fig. 25). They are decorated with a double-headed eagle and the Greek monogram of Ioan Terter (r. 1376 – 1395c.), despot of Bulgaria.⁵⁶ Spier believes these earrings to be imperial gifts to the women in the Terter court, made in a Constantinopolitan workshop.⁵⁷ Ioan Terter had close ties to Constantinople, as his sister married Michael Palaiologos, the son of John V Palaiologos. This allows us to establish a dating for these earrings to the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Their circular shape, with pendants probably decorated with pearls, closely reminds us of those represented in the Peribleptos.

The role of Saint Anne as protector of childbearing women, as well as of women in labour, originates from the *Protoevangelion* of James, recounting the birth of the Virgin as a result of the prayers of Saints Joachim and Anne to God.⁵⁸ Based on a series of anthropological studies on skeletons from different excavations in rural

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Spier, *Late Byzantine Rings, 1204-1453* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013), 26 and pl. 20 fig. 20a-b.

⁵⁷ Spier, 26.

⁵⁸ On the cult and devotion of Saint Anne and childless women, see Eirini Panou, 'Patronage in the Patria, Matronage and Maternity', in *Female Founders in Byzantium & beyond: An International Colloquium*, ed. Lioba Theis, Margaret Mullett, and Michael Grünbart (Wien: Böhlau, 2014), 129–34, esp. 132-33.

Greece, Sharon Gerstel notes that ‘repeated pregnancies made women more vulnerable to disease as the toll of childbearing and birth compromised immune systems’.⁵⁹ Childbearing and complications linked to labour were life-threatening for women both in rural and urban contexts. While the association of Saint Anne to childbearing and fertility was a well-established cult in the west, there is more tentative evidence of such association in the Byzantine world. Nevertheless, for late Byzantine Greece, it is reasonable to assume that such a cult might have developed as a response to the high mortality of women during their fertile years.⁶⁰

The scene in Hagia Sophia portrays the largest number of women, including more watching from overlooking buildings (Fig. 21). The fresco is placed in a separate southeast chapel in Hagia Sophia, dedicated to a cycle on the infancy of the Virgin. Such a depiction in the palace church of Mystras suggests that childbearing was a concern for the court, probably representing an auspice for pregnancy, safe gestation, and labour for members of the imperial family in Mystras, and, because of the dating of the construction of the chapel and the painted fresco to the third quarter of the fourteenth century,⁶¹ for the Latin wives of the Moreote Despots in particular. The Western origin of the *basilissai* may have had a role in the selection of this cycle for that chapel, as the cult of Saint Anne was very developed in late medieval Europe.⁶²

⁵⁹ Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium*, 77.

⁶⁰ Gerstel, ‘Painted Sources for Female Piety in Medieval Byzantium’, esp. 98.

⁶¹ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, 13.

⁶² A number of publications are available on the cult of Saint Anne, including Virginia Nixon, *Mary’s Mother: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Europe* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Jennifer Welsh, *The Cult of St. Anne in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017).

Childlessness or fear of a failed pregnancy, a risk for any woman, might have been central to the commissioning of the chapel.⁶³ Melita Emmanuel believes it to be linked to Isabelle de Lusignan.⁶⁴ While there is no direct evidence supporting this hypothesis, the argument is nevertheless compelling as its dating coincides with the years of the Despotate of Manuel Kantakouzenos.⁶⁵

By linking the fresco to Isabelle, or more generally to the court of Mystras, it is possible to read the depiction of the scene of the Birth of Virgin as expression of the court's preoccupation with the lack of an heir from Isabelle or any other women from the inter-faith marriages. Without such an heir, future dynastic connections and alliances between the Despotate and its neighbouring polities would not outlive the Latin spouses. This representation is an index of the agency of these women: the social relation that ties the Latin woman and her court in the joint interest in bearing a child, both for dynastic and geopolitical purposes (Table 2). We shall see more direct evidence of this preoccupation when considering the funerary oration dedicated to Cleophe Malatesti by her physician Demetrios Pepagomenos in the next chapter.⁶⁶

The interpretation of indices of dynastic agency of Latin *basilissai* becomes more straightforward when considering those found in portraits and sculpted details reflecting patronage acts. To these we turn next in examining the Peribleptos.

⁶³ Angelike E. Laiou, 'Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985): 66–67.

⁶⁴ On the link between Isabelle de Lusignan and the south eastern chapel in Hagia Sophia, see Emmanuel, 'Religious Imagery in Mystra. Donors and Iconographic Programmes', esp. 122-23.

⁶⁵ Emmanuel, esp. 120.

⁶⁶ See below ch. III.5 - Funerary orations, esp. 177-176

II.2 Agency of Latin princesses in the Peribleptos

The *katholikon* of the monastery dedicated to the Panagia Peribleptos is located in the southeast area of the city.⁶⁷ Patronage acts informed the transformation of the monastic complex during its two main construction phases (Table 25 – Table 29).⁶⁸ The first constructive phase, between 1360 and 1370, is associated with Isabelle de Lusignan.⁶⁹ Aspasia Louve-Kize identifies a second constructive phase between 1380 and 1382, during which the door on the west side of the church was closed, creating a niche. A chapel, communicating with the church on the west side, was added, and a portico was built on the south side. A patronage act is clearly referred to by the donors' portraits in the main *naos* of the church (Fig. 26 – Fig. 33, Table 29 Fig. 35 – Table 29 Fig. 36). Others are referred to by a series of carved marble details that are still visible in several marble slabs (Fig. 34 – Fig. 37).

The literature refers to the donor portrait as revealing information regarding at least two couples in the court of Mystras. One is the first ruling couple of the Despotate of Morea, Despot Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de Lusignan, whose connection to the church is acknowledged in the secondary literature, based on comparative formal analysis of the emblems on the carved details found on marble slabs inside and outside the church (Fig. 38, Fig. 50).⁷⁰ The second couple is that of Leontos Mavropappas and his wife, identified as the couple portrayed inside the *naos*,⁷¹ on

⁶⁷ On the church and its decoration, see below Theotokos Peribleptos in Appendix 02, 352-353

⁶⁸ Both phases are believed to have occurred in the last quarter of the fourteenth century: the first one in the sixties or seventies of the fourteenth century, and the second one in the eighties. The two main Byzantine construction phases are discussed in Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά'.

⁶⁹ Λούβη-Κίζη, esp. 101 and 103 εἰκ. 2.

⁷⁰ Λούβη-Κίζη, esp. 101-02.

⁷¹ Louve-Kize suggests that the couple 'is connected to the second building phase of the church and perhaps to the person mentioned in the Byzantine cruciform inscription [with the name] of Leo

the basis of an engraved marble slab bearing two monograms with his name, now placed on the wall of the vestibule, attached to the south side of the church (Fig. 39).⁷²

The evidence examined here suggests a layering of indices reflecting the agency of two Latin *basilissai*, Isabelle de Lusignan and Bartholomea Acciaiuoli, more clearly defining their role in the building phases of the monastic complex, and introducing a previously unnoticed connection between the iconographic motifs of the stone decorations of the interior of the *katholikon* of the monastery, and the family of Bartholomea Acciaiuoli.

II.2.a The double portrait in the Peribleptos

A life size portrait of a man and woman are depicted in the recess of the wall corresponding to the niche on the west wall of the central nave, facing the main space of the church (Fig. 26, Table 29 Fig. 35, Table 29 Fig. 36). They seem to be standing almost on the ground floor of the *naos*. A church is depicted between the man and the woman (Fig. 32). Kalopissi-Verti describes: ‘a patron couple depicted on the west wall offering a model of the church must be associated with this second phase, clearly presenting the new owners and renovators of the church after the removal of the Kantakouzenos family’.⁷³

Mavropappa, which was repositioned in a second use, at the entrance of post-Byzantine narthex’, in Λούβη-Κίζη, 102.

⁷² Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, 133.

⁷³ Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement’, in *Heaven & Earth. Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece*, ed. Jenny Albani and Eugenia Chalkia, vol. II, II vols (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), 224–39, esp. 235.

The two figures are portrayed in the act of offering the model of the church (Fig. 32, Fig. 33).⁷⁴ Unlike the cases from Mystras seen above, in this depiction there are no inscriptions identifying the figures in the fresco contemporary to its realization.

However, on the painted model of the church there is an inscription that reads: Ὑ Α Ζ Η Σ (u a z E s) / Τ Γ Ε Σ Ρ ΟΥΑΣ(?) (T/G E S R ouas) / ΚΙΣ (kis). Louve-Kize interprets the letters as “Καζηνοῦς, ΛΗCNOYA”, Kazenos, LESNOUA, a corruption of Kantakouzenos, Lusignan. So, on this basis we might conclude that these two figures are Isabelle de Lusignan and Manuel Kantakouzenos. However, Louve-Kize attributes the inscription to a post-Byzantine illiterate monk.

The hands of the two figures are raised in an act of both prayer and offering. Their bodies are slightly turned towards the centre of the pictorial composition, while their faces are looking towards the centre of the main nave. The overall iconographical intention is to portray the two as κτήτορες, *ktetores*, or founders of the church.⁷⁵ The

⁷⁴ The inscription is painted on the surface of the fresco on the right side of the model rendering the church. Based on the calligraphy used for the inscription, with the help of Dr Foteini Spingou, I was able to establish that the inscription might be added on the fresco on a second phase. Dr Spingou believes the inscription might be post-Byzantine. See Λούβη-Κίζη, ‘Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά’, 112 n. 43.

⁷⁵ The literature on Middle and late Byzantium donation acts and donors and founders depictions is vast. Some of the studies that inform this current discussion include Tania Velmans, ‘Le portrait dans l’art des Paléologues’, in *Art et Société à Byzance sous les Paléologues* (Venezia: Stamperia di Venezia, 1971), 91–148; Hans Belting, ‘Die Auftraggeber der spätbyzantinischen Bildhandschrift’, in *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues* (Venezia: Stamperia di Venezia, 1971), 149–76; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth Century Churches of Greece* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992); Liz James, ‘Monks, Monastic Art, the Sanctoral Cycle and the Middle Byzantine Church’, in *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek, Roman and Semitic Studies, the Queen’s University of Belfast, 1994), 162–75; Nancy P. Ševčenko, ‘The Representation of Donors and Holy Figures on Four Byzantine Icons’, *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society* 35 (1994): 157–64; Annemarie W. Carr, ‘Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art’, *Gesta* 45, no. 2 (2006): 189–98; Emmanuel, ‘Religious Imagery in Mystra. Donors and Iconographic Programmes’; Jean-Michel Spieser and Elisabeth Yota, eds., *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin: actes du colloque international de l’université de Fribourg 13-15 mars 2008* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2012). In particular on female founders, see Theis, Mullett, and Grünbart, *Female founders in Byzantium & beyond: an international colloquium: September 23-25, 2008, Institut für Kunstgeschichte, University of Vienna*; Brooks, ‘Women’s Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium’; Gerstel and Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Female Church Founders: The Agency of the Village Widow in Late Byzantium’;

niche, square in plan, must have been decorated after the second construction phase.⁷⁶ It is decorated on the lower level by frescoes simulating marble slabs, higher on the flanks of the niche and lower in the central part, creating a base for the two figures. On both sides are the portraits of two saints: on the right side of the male figure, a military saint; on the left side of the female figure another military saint. These two saints are depicted standing on a higher level than that where the man and the woman are. The two saints serve both as guardians of the church – according to a well-established iconographic tradition – as well as direct guardians of the two donors.⁷⁷

Just above the two figures, in the top centre of the arch, an image of the bust of the Theotokos emerges from a round halo (Fig. 26). The Theotokos stretches her arms out with her hands open, her palms facing the centre of the *naos* and the viewer. In front of her is the bust of Christ, holding his arms and hands in the same pose as his mother. At the centre of the interior of the arch is a portrait of an archangel. The importance of the act of donation is reinforced by the iconographic choice of the Theotokos and Christ depicted just above the donors. They appear as recipients of the donation and as carriers of heaven's blessing of the construction and dedication. The holy mother and child are shown as they pierce the dome of heaven, performing a blessing, in order to emphasize the concept of heavenly intercession.

Karamaouna, Peker, and Uyar, 'Female Donors in Thirteenth-Century Wall Painting in Cappadocia: An Overview'; Leonte, 'A Late Byzantine Patroness: Helena Kantakouzene Palaiologina'; Talbot, 'Female Patronage in the Palaiologan Era'.

⁷⁶ Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά', 112.

⁷⁷ On the role of military and warrior saints, see Christopher Walter, *Studies in Byzantine Iconography* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), 157–78; Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003).

The figures of the founders occupy the lower register, while the Theotokos features in the upper register just below the arch. These two registers are separated by a line that bends upwards, toward both of the niche's sides (Fig. 26), giving a sense of three-dimensionality on the bi-dimensional surface of the fresco, as if the niche, which has a quasi-rectangular plan, were indeed an apse with a semi-circular plan surmounted by a conch. A similar visual rendition can be found in the detached wall painting with the Virgin of the Catalans dating from the middle of the fifteenth century, from the church of the Prophet Elijah in Athens, now in the Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens (Fig. 40).⁷⁸

In the same nave, just opposite the portrait of the two donors, another portrait of the Theotokos and Christ appears on the conch of the main east apse (Fig. 41, Table 26 Fig. 26, Table 26 Fig. 26A). In this second portrait, the most important of the Peribleptos, she is represented enthroned with the infant Christ on her lap, looking towards the centre of the *naos*, as are the two donors. The Theotokos Peribleptos, the notable God bearer, oversees the donation act from above in the bema conch, while the donors stand in the space of the nave in the area where the laity was supposed to attend religious functions.

This pictorial programme reinforces the act of donation, addressing the spatial quality of its bi-dimensional rendition in the niche. Even when the opaque icon screen had been standing, the conch of the apse would have been visible above it, from the *naos*. Thanks to this arrangement, the act of donation not only takes place

⁷⁸ *Byzantine Collections. The Permanent Exhibition* (Athens: Byzantine & Christian Museum, 2010), 184-5 fig. 124; Anastasia Drandaki, Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and Anastasia Tourta, eds., *Heaven & Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections* (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), vol. II, 314-5 cat. n. 164.

on the surface of the fresco in the niche, but also appropriates the three-dimensional space of the nave, which becomes both the space for the narration of dogmatic truths of the Orthodox confession, as well as a space for remembering the donors. It functions, in the context of the Byzantine tradition, as remarked by Otto Demus in his 1948 essay on Byzantine mosaics, as a ‘picture-space [...] a whole [...] giving reality to the conception of the divine order’, as well as a space where the holy persons and the beholders are sharing the divine liturgy, so that the latter are ‘enclosed in the grand icon of the church’ and take ‘part in the events’ they see.⁷⁹ The image of two donors and their donation becomes a presence in the liturgy, alongside the role generally assigned to military saints. The representation would have been experienced by laymen, laywomen and monks of the monastery, who, during the liturgy in the *naos*, were reminded of it, in a constant visual re-enactment. For the community gathering in the Peribleptos they became eternal participants of the celebration of the mystery of Christ’s salvation.⁸⁰

The only one to suggest an identification of the donors is Louve-Kize, who says the couple are ‘connected to the second building phase of the church and perhaps to the person mentioned in the Byzantine cruciform inscription [with the name] of Leo Mavropappa, which was repositioned in a second use, at the entrance of post-Byzantine narthex’.⁸¹ The post-Byzantine narthex, on the south side of the church, substituted a previous portico during a third construction phase, so we can assume

⁷⁹ Otto Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration; Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*. (Boston: Boston Book & Art Shop, 1955), 13-4. For a reading of how icons operate in the space of the church, see the analysis of the spatial composition of the Annunciation in the *katholikon* of Daphni by Demus in Demus, 9. On this see also Robert F. Taft, *Through Their Own Eyes: Liturgy as the Byzantines Saw It* (Berkeley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2006), 61 n. 11.

⁸⁰ Taft, *Through Their Own Eyes*, 57.

⁸¹ Λούβη-Κίζη, ‘Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά’, 102.

that the slab was moved there during the third construction phase, which Louve-Kize dates to 1714.⁸²

This identification is problematic however. There is no direct evidence linking the monogram on the vestibule to the figures portrayed in the niche. Furthermore, while it is not unusual to find portraits inside churches commissioned or restored either by members of the imperial family or Despots, it is unusual to see two large figures, especially the female figure, positioned in such a prominent site inside the *katholikon* of a male monastery, central in the iconographic programme of the whole church, positioned on the main axis of the church opposite the main apse, and aligned with the dome. This unusual act of appropriation must have been well considered before its realization took place. Sarah Brooks, for example, finds this iconography very rare in Byzantium. She describes the case of Hagios Nicholas in Phountoukli, Rhodes where a double portrait commemorates the foundation of the church (Fig. 42). The portrait, from the fifteenth century, represents a laywoman whose name is unknown, accompanied by her husband Nicholas Bardoane, a local titled officer, the *pansebastos*, also holding the title of *logothetes*. This double portrait of founders also shows them in the composition holding the model of the church they are donating to Christ.⁸³ This portrait type, with founders both holding the church model, occurs three times in Rhodes, and is extremely unusual according to Brooks.⁸⁴

Even though the lack of historical evidence does not allow us to be definitive, we believe that the couple portrayed are in fact Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de

⁸² Λούβη-Κίζη, esp. 101-104 and 103 εικ. 2.

⁸³ Brooks, 'Women's Authority in Death: The Patronage of Aristocratic Laywomen in Late Byzantium', 329-32.

⁸⁴ Brooks, 330.

Lusignan. Because of its position in the niche, the fresco must have been executed after the second construction phase, and therefore after Manuel's death in 1380. Theodore I was made despot in 1381, but only arrived in Mystras in 1383. During those two years until Theodore I arrived, Mystras was still governed by the Kantakouzenoi: Manuel's brother Matthew first, and, when he died in 1383, Demetrios Kantakouzenos.⁸⁵ Isabelle was still alive at the time but the emperor had already given the title to Theodore I.

Our hypothesis is that the remaining Kantakouzenoi saw through the second construction phase and produced the fresco to memorialize Manuel Kantakouzenos and his wife Isabelle de Lusignan, who had commissioned the church in the first place. This would explain why the church represented in the fresco is very clearly the church of the first construction phase. In the model, the west side of the church shows the doorway below the *bifora*, which was to be closed in the second construction phase to produce the niche of the double portrait, and the south side shows a plain side with a door, and no portico or vestibule, which would have been added after the second construction phase. If the couple portrayed are Manuel and Isabelle, the model is explained in the context of a traditional founder iconography, delivering the church as they conceived it. It is harder to explain why the Mavropappas would have chosen to depict the church not as they saw it, but as the founders delivered it.

⁸⁵ Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, 158-59.

Louve-Kize deciphers the writing on the model of the church as ‘Kantakouzenos Lusignan’ (Fig. 32, Fig. 33).⁸⁶ This writing appears to be post-Byzantine and Louve-Kize attributes it to a subsequent illiterate monk, due to the rough nature of the calligraphy, and she sees it therefore as not reliable. If, however, it names those portrayed in the fresco, it would be consistent with our interpretation of the two as Manuel and Isabelle.

This interpretation also gives a stronger explanation of the fresco’s position in the church. If those portrayed are Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de Lusignan, this is a representation of the despot and his wife, done when the remaining members of the dynasty wanted to remark the origin of the church in the face of a power transition to the Palaiologoi. It is hard to explain why a portrait of the Mavropappas would have had a similar positioning in a functioning church of a monastery.

Louve-Kize implies the two figures cannot be the Despots because they are not dressed with imperial insignia, but this could be explained by the timing of the fresco and the transition of power between the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi. The Kantakouzenoi delivered the second construction phase and the fresco, but the title was probably already lost at the time of the production of the fresco, so the choice of representing the founders as aristocrats was not unreasonable.

Careful reading of the depiction of the two figures offers further evidence. The male figure standing on the left wears a full-length blue caftan with long tight sleeves (Fig. 27). Where the right side of the lower part of the caftan overlaps the left side, we can

⁸⁶ Λούβη-Κίζη, ‘Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά’, 112 n. 43.

distinguish a brown shade that might indicate that the inside caftan was either coloured differently or padded with fur. Alternatively, the two lower sides of the caftan do not overlap, but are simply left apart, allowing us to see the tunic worn below the caftan, explaining the brown colouration. The latter solution might be more plausible, since a very small brown detail around the man's right wrist indicates that below the caftan the man is indeed wearing a brown, full-length tunic. The colour used to render the tunic then also matches the colour of the hood covering the man's head. Given the state of conservation of the fresco, however, it is difficult to distinguish between brown or a deteriorated red. If the latter were the case this would be consistent with a *rouchon*, the undergarment that Pseudo-Kodinos describes as appropriate for Despots.⁸⁷ Due to the poor state of preservation, it is not possible to extract other significant details of the decorative pattern on the exterior of the caftan, which would have been useful to determine its origin, as in the case of that worn by the male figure in the fresco decorating the *arcosolium* of the Tomb F in the Chora Parekklesion (Fig. 19).⁸⁸

The caftan is kept closed on the front by a square white kerchief, folded in half along the diagonal. The resulting triangular shape is worn with the hypotenuse around the waist with the two catheti pointing down, and is tied in front with a knot that the painter renders carefully (Fig. 27). This item, and the way in which it is worn, are original elements in late period depictions of high-ranking dignitaries,⁸⁹ typically portrayed, instead, while adorned with smaller handkerchiefs tucked in their belts.⁹⁰

This more traditional style can be seen on the male figure in the Tomb C of the

⁸⁷ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 37 n. 18.

⁸⁸ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, Vol. I, 288-292, Vol. III pls. 546, 547.

⁸⁹ Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra', 517.

⁹⁰ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Appendix 3, 333 cat. n. 44, 334 cat. nn. 45, 46, 49, 335 cat. nn. 54, 55, 338 cat. n. 63, 338 cat. n. 69, 341 cat. n. 77.

Chora Parekklesion (Fig. 18).⁹¹ A similar one is shown in the male portrait in the southwest gallery of the church of the Theotokos Hodegetria in Mystras (Fig. 14, Fig. 15C).

Because to our knowledge we do not have representations similar to the one of the Peribleptos in the Byzantine visual literature, to understand the significance of this item, we have to turn to representations outside the Byzantine context. Pisanello sketched the Byzantine delegation attending the Council of Ferrara-Florence, probably between March 1438, when the council was in Ferrara, and January 1439 when it moved to Florence, although the exact dating of his drawings remains elusive (Fig. 43, Fig. 44A-B).⁹² Pisanello was likely inclined to represent the delegation and their garments faithfully, as the Greek delegation made an impression on the Latin public specifically for their attire. Vespasiano da Bisticci, in his *Lives of Illustrious Men in the fifteenth century*,⁹³ described how he thought they were dressed like the ancient Greeks, revealing an antiquarian interest towards Greek garments common amongst Latin observers of the council.⁹⁴

In those months, Pisanello, either in Ferrara or in Florence, drew the emperor and his entourage. In one such drawing, held at the Louvre, Pisanello sketched Emperor John VIII Palaiologos (Fig. 44A).⁹⁵ We know this to be the emperor not just because of the

⁹¹ Parani, 66.

⁹² Evans, *Byzantium*, 530 cat. n. 318a-b.

⁹³ Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV scritte da Vespasiano da Bisticci; stampate la prima volta da Angelo Mai e nuovamente da Adolfo Bartoli* (Firenze: Barbèra, Bianchi, 1859).

⁹⁴ Life of Pope Eugenius IV in da Bisticci, 14–15.

⁹⁵ The drawing by Pisanello, *Arabic inscription, Emperor John VIII Palaiologos on horseback, members of retinue, head of a horse*, 1438 pen and ink, 20x28.9cm, Musée du Louvre, inv. MI 1062 recto. See Luke Syson, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court* (London, N.H.: National Gallery Company, 2001), 31 fig. 1.36.

distinctive garments and hat, but also because Pisanello described in some detail, on the same drawing, the emperor's clothing. On the same page is also sketched a figure, portrayed from the back, wearing a similar kerchief to the one shown in the Peribleptos (Fig. 44B). Another drawing of the same group, held in Chicago, shows on the verso arrows and quiver likely belonging to the emperor's hunting gear, which has been interpreted as indicating that those drawings were sketches of the emperor in a private moment, possibly hunting, rather than an official function (Fig. 43). This is also because his garment does not match any of the descriptions we have of his ceremonial attire from sources such as the Pseudo-Kodinos. It is therefore likely that also the unknown figure shown from the back was either someone of the emperor's entourage, or – as suggested by Vickers – the emperor himself.⁹⁶ In the latter interpretation, the frontal view of the same costume provided on the recto of the Chicago drawing, appears to be a *granatza*, a *lapatzas* worn as the emperor would in the description by the Pseudo-Kodinos. While this man remains unidentified beyond doubt, it is intriguing that it could have been the emperor or another 'Byzantine ruler', such as Despot Demetrios, the emperor's brother, also in attendance at the council and known to have also been in Florence.⁹⁷

What is important is that the very unique kerchief, worn in the Peribleptos fresco, is worn, some fifty years later, in an unofficial setting by a Byzantine ruler of great standing. The implication for the Peribleptos portrait is potentially significant. We know that the ceremonial described by the Pseudo-Kodinos was known in Mystras, as demonstrated by the portrait of Kaniotes, who is represented as *skouterios* as detailed in the inscription of the fresco, and who follows precisely the instructions on

⁹⁶ Michael Vickers, 'Some Preparatory Drawings for Pisanello's Medallion of John VIII Palaeologus', *The Art Bulletin* 60, no. 3 (1978): 417–424, esp. 423–24.

⁹⁷ Evans, *Byzantium*, 532.

official garments of the Pseudo-Kodinos for that particular role (Fig. 14, Fig. 15C).⁹⁸

If the person depicted in the Peribleptos had been a member of the court and had known his role, why would he have not been portrayed with his appropriate title and garment? Why would someone with a sufficiently high profile to have such a donor portrait, and to be wearing unofficial garments similar to those worn by those in the entourage of the emperor only a few decades later, not have been identified in the fresco? This representation is consistent with the hypothesis that this is, in fact, Manuel Kantakouzenos: his agency in the community is represented, while his imperial role is under-played, given the changed political circumstances. It is a de-personalization of the representation, to ensure the celebration of the founding act is preserved, while the broader political context is left unacknowledged.

In this interpretation, the woman on the right of the donors' fresco would then be Isabelle de Lusignan (Fig. 28 - Fig. 31).⁹⁹ The female figure is depicted wearing a long blue dress covered by a brown overcoat. The colours are the same as those used for the attire of the male figure, but inverted: he is wearing blue over brown, while she is wearing brown over blue. Her overcoat has long tight sleeves that stop at the wrists, leaving enough room to see the lower blue tunic (Fig. 28, Fig. 31). Both the overcoat and the lower tunic feature a round-neck collar, showing the neck (Fig. 28). Over her head, a white veil, showing traces of a ribbon with embroidered decorations at shoulder level, ends in front, with a fringe, below the shoulder (Fig. 29).

⁹⁸ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, esp. 62-63 and 305 n. 121.

⁹⁹ On the role of Isabelle de Lusignan as a diplomatic and political figure during the third and early fourth quarters of the fourteenth century in Morea, see Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIVe siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène', 62-76.

Underneath the veil, just above the forehead – now scraped off – it is possible to see a detail of her hair (Fig. 30). From what is left, it appears that the woman had fair red hair, a colour that also appears in portraits of women in other frescoes inside the Peribleptos, such as the woman carrying a baby on her shoulder in the scene of the Entry in Jerusalem (Fig. 45B), and in frescoes in other churches in Mystras, such as the woman depicted in the group in the background in the scene of Lazarus in upper gallery of the Pantanassa (Fig. 46).

The poorly preserved fresco surface does not allow us to fully distinguish the nature of her costume, but from these details it is still possible to infer that she is high ranking, underscored but the meticulous rendering of the manicured fingernails of the left hand (Fig. 31). The posture and overall attire of this figure recall a similar figure portrayed on the right side of the funerary portrait in the Tomb of Michael Tornikes in the Chora Parekklesion (Fig. 5).¹⁰⁰ It also reminds us of donor portraits in the Lusignan court in Cyprus, such as the portraits dating before 1375 of the man and woman in the Church of the Holy Cross in Pelendri (Fig. 47), or the portraits of King Janus and Queen Charlotte, dating to 1421 in the Passion scenes in the Royal Chapel in Pyrga (Fig. 48).¹⁰¹ In all these cases, the wife has equal standing to the husband in the portrait, signalling her importance in the act of patronage and commemoration.

No historical evidence is available to prove the hypothesis that the couple is indeed Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de Lusignan. But, if our interpretation is correct, the portrait shows, next to a Byzantine aristocratic man, a foreign Catholic wife,

¹⁰⁰ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, Vol. I, 276-80, Vol. III, pls. 537, 538; Velmans, 'Le portrait dans l'art des Paléologues', 138-39 and fig. 60; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Appendix 3, 337 n. 61.

¹⁰¹ Annemarie W. Carr, 'Byzantines and Italians on Cyprus: Images from Art', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995): 339-57, esp. 345 and figs. 11 and 14.

recognizing her as an active agent in the community and in the city.¹⁰² This recognition is explained in the context of the powerful agency that Isabelle would have played in the Despotate as a representative of a powerful dynasty in the Mediterranean.

Comparable acts of mutual recognition can be seen in decorative elements in the country of origin of the Cypriote *basilissa*, in the principal church of the Monastery of Hagios Ioannis Lampadistis, in Kalopanagiotis, for example. On the wooden templon dating from the fourteenth or fifteenth century, separating the sanctuary from the nave, we can see, on the panels and the architrave, a decorative motif representing the Byzantine double-headed eagle alongside the lion of the Lusignan (Fig. 49). ‘These two symbols of power, easily identifiable, were speaking as much to the Greeks as to the French of the island’.¹⁰³

Coats of arms provide a further, indirect indication that the double portrait in the Peribleptos may be a portrayal of Manuel and Isabelle. This indication comes from the exterior of the church. A sign on the stone decoration on the upper portion of the south wall of the transept might have been a representation of the Lusignan coat of arms (Fig. 50). On both sides of a *bifora*, framed by brick fragments, there are two stone slabs with carved decoration. The one on the left features a rampant lion wearing a crown and holding a sword, a rendition similar to the one of the Lusignan coat of arms, although also associated with others. The decoration on the slab on the

¹⁰² On the use of religious spaces by laymen, laywomen and the clergy, see Sharon E. J. Gerstel, ‘The Layperson in Church’, in *Byzantine Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 102–23.

¹⁰³ Maria G. Parani, ‘Le Royaume Des Lusignan (1192-1489): La Tradition Byzantine’, in *Chypre: Entre Byzance et l’Occident, IVe - XVIe Siècle*, ed. Jannic Durand and Dorota Giovannoni (Paris: Louvre éditions, 2012), 293–301, esp. 297-98.

right has been scraped off, but, based on what is left in the rough surface, scholars believe it featured the four Jerusalem crosses of the Lusignan coat of arms.¹⁰⁴

Given how difficult it is to read, it is not possible to prove a direct association to the Lusignan. However, unlike the one on the left that could also be appropriated by subsequent families, this particular decoration could only be associated with the Lusignan. During one of the transformation phases of the building, it must have appeared inappropriate and therefore removed. This obliteration can only be read as part of a patronage act that, even if not attributed, aimed at associating the church to someone other than the wife of Manuel Kantakouzenos – maybe the wife of the new Despot Theodore I Palaiologos, Bartholomea Acciaiuoli, whom he married roughly at the same time as the church was undergoing its second building phase. It was an attempt by the first Palaiologan Despot and his wife to remove associations of Isabelle de Lusignan in the Peribleptos. Kalopissi-Verti says ‘The careful defacing of all the emblems and family crests of the Lusignan and Kantakouzenos families (upright lion) on the exterior of the monastery’s church was an act of *damnatio memoriae*, undertaken immediately after the Palaiologan family assumed the leadership of Mistra’.¹⁰⁵ However, the fresco of the two donors in the Peribleptos may have survived this intervention because of the neutral nature of the representation of the previous despot without imperial insignia.

¹⁰⁴ In Louve-Kize opinion, the remaining traces of the decoration ‘may allow the assumption that the central issue was indeed cross’, in Λούβη-Κίζη, ‘Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά’, 106, 106 and εἰκ. 8.

¹⁰⁵ Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement’, 2013, 234-35.

II.2.b Bartholomea's fleur-de-lis in the Peribleptos

Further evidence from the decoration of the church supports its association with another important couple in Mystras, Despot Theodore I Palaiologos and Bartholomea Acciaiuoli.

Inside the church are preserved a number of carved marble fragments that support this second association. The first is an architrave now laying on the floor of the apse, once part of the iconostasis (Fig. 36, Fig. 37). It bears a carved schematic architectural decoration showing pairs of columns or pillars rising from a stylobate. The two sets of columns are topped by the same continuous architrave, arranged to form an arch. This architectural rendition represents the typical configuration of a triumphal arch, sided by two horizontal trabeations, common as a classic iconographic rendition of glory and triumph.¹⁰⁶

In this particular case, the motif clearly marks the significance of the other distinctive decoration: a fleur-de-lis carved in the space between the two sets of columns/pillars, underneath the arch (Fig. 37). Clearly the positioning of this decorative element reinforces its attributes as a heraldic emblem. In previous literature, the emblem had been associated with Isabelle de Lusignan, because the fleur-de-lis is associated with families of Frankish origins.¹⁰⁷ This attribution, even though historically appropriate, should be reconsidered. The flower is not a generic Frankish lily, which can be found instead on a sculpted relief on the exterior of the apse of the church (Fig. 38); rather, it is shown as a blooming lily with two stems sprouting upwards from the calyx of

¹⁰⁶ On the iconography used to render the setting of triumph and the architecture associated with the "Porta Triumphalis", see Melanie Grunow Sobocinski, 'Porta Triumphalis and Fortuna Redux: Reconsidering the Evidence', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 54 (2009): 135–164.

¹⁰⁷ Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά', esp. 109–11.

the flower and two stems sprouting downwards from its centre. This iconography is different from the one usually found on Frankish emblems or coat of arms (Fig. 51, Fig. 52). It can be seen on the emblem of Bartholomea Acciaiuoli, whose father, Nerio I Acciaiuoli, had Florentine origins, emphasized by the use of the Florentine fleur-de-lis in his coat of arms and emblems.¹⁰⁸

Even though the Florentine nature of this flower has already been noted by scholars, such as Louve-Kize, they have failed to connect the motif with the Acciaiuoli family. Of the many fleurs-de-lis associated with the family, two are revealing: the one used in the full blazon of the family as copied in the A9 blazon in the MS 471 in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Fig. 53);¹⁰⁹ a second one appearing in the florin coinage associated with the Acciaiuoli from the Duchy of Athens (Fig. 54).

The Acciaiuoli blazon in MS 471 is composed of a rampant blue lion facing left over a shield. The shield is topped by the second component of the blazon, a Florentine red and white blossoming fleur-de-lis showing sprouting stems. Similar elements feature in a particular coinage of the Florentine gold florin, associated with the Acciaiuoli family, which bears, on the obverse, the fleur-de-lis and, on the reverse, a depiction of Saint John the Baptist. In a particular version of the coinage, on the top left side of the reverse, is a small shield framing a rampant lion, a direct association with the Acciaiuoli family and their role as Dukes of Athens (Fig. 55). A

¹⁰⁸ On Nerio I Acciaiuoli, see Carl Hermann Friedrich Johann Hopf, *De Historiae Ducatus Atheniensis Fontibus* .. (Bonnae: apud EWerberum, 1852); Julian Chrysostomides, ed., *Monumenta Peloponnesiaca: Documents for the History of the Peloponnese in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995); Δημήτριος Κ. Γιαννακόπουλος, *Δουκάτο των Αθηνών. Η κυριαρχία των Acciaiuoli* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Βάνιας, 2006).

¹⁰⁹ MS 471, Manoscritti, 471, "Armi di Firenze, Città, terre e Castelli, e Famiglie fiorentine", sec. XVIII. Archivio di Stato di Firenze. The letter A9 refers to the internal numeration of the manuscript. For images from this manuscript see 'Famiglia ACCIAIOLI (Fasc. 7)', accessed 10 September 2015, <http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/ceramellipapiani2/index.php?page=Famiglia&id=11>.

documented example of the florin mint in association with the family ruling the Duchy of Athens can be seen in Schulmberger's publication on the numismatics of the Latin Orient (Fig. 54).¹¹⁰

Even though the rendition of each of the flowers differs slightly due to different media and relative periodization, the iconography of these three fleurs-de-lis is very similar in terms of their constitutive elements: a central calyx, flanked on both side by two bending calyces ending with curling rims and a gem, and between those and the central calyx, on both sides, two upward sprouting stems, also ending with gems. The central calyx and the two bending ones are gathered together by a small horizontal band. Below, a foot base is crafted out of two small petals. The similarities between the three fleurs-de-lis lead us to the conclusion that the one carved on the architrave (Fig. 37), which was meant to be used for the iconostasis of the bema in the Peribleptos, is of the Florentine kind. Because of its positioning at the centre of the schematized triumphal arch, itself in a predominant part of the church right at the centre of the main axis in front of the bema, it is likely to be the coat of arms of someone related to a patronage act associated with the building.

The fleur-de-lis also features as decorative motif on two other carved marble architraves inside the *naos* of the Peribleptos, used symmetrically above two semi-pillars attached to the church walls, marking the west side of the transverse barrel-vaulted transept in front of the iconostasis. Both marble architraves carry the decoration: the one on the north side has two fleurs-de-lis on the front, while the one

¹¹⁰ Gustave Léon Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Orient latin*, Société de l'Orient latin. Publications patronnées. t. 1 (Paris, 1878), pl. XII 33 Au.

on the south side of the transept has two on the side (Fig. 34A-C, Table 27 Fig. 27, Table 28 Fig. 34). All of these also show the Florentine design with sprouting stems.

Based on the periodization of the construction phases of the church and on the Florentine nature of the fleur-de-lis employed in the interior, there is only one possibility that connects the emblem to a family blazon related to Mystras at that time: that of the Acciaiuoli family.

There is another significant emblem that relates to the Acciaiuoli of Athens. On the exterior of the church and at the entrance of the precinct enclosing the church, there are carved stone slabs decorated with details indicative of the identity of individuals connected to the monastery. Above the entry gate a stone plaque bears a relief expressing clear intent of patronage (Fig. 56, Fig. 57). At the centre of the plaque is a sculpted round monogram with the name of the church: Περιβλέπτος/Peribleptos.

The round monogram is flanked by two rampant lions. On the lower side of the whole plaque is a row of small fleurs-de-lis.¹¹¹ While, in this case, the fleurs-de-lis are stylized and employed as a decorative pattern, they are stylistically close and similarly employed to those carved in the fragment of a marble arcosolium with a three-lobed Gothic arch, preserved at the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth century, which also places this piece in Athens during the reign of the Acciaiuoli (Fig. 58).¹¹²

¹¹¹ The marble slab was originally positioned somewhere else. Marks on the left side of the slab indicate its repositioning. This is highlighted by Millet, who included this marble slab in his 1899 article on the inscriptions of Mystras, see Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 133.

¹¹² *Byzantine Collections. The Permanent Exhibition*, 186-87 fig. 125 (BXM 1094, Byzantine Collections).

On the two top corners of the plaque there are two additional fleurs-de-lis. Two other fleurs-de-lis are carved in very close proximity of the two lions (Fig. 57C). They are represented hanging upside down and appear to be shaken by the lions' breath in an association that also appears in another version of the Acciaiuoli's emblem in the A13 blazon in the MS 471 in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Fig. 59).¹¹³ The fleurs-de-lis in this case do not show the sprouting stems of the more complex Florentine design, but this simpler form is used for the Acciaiuoli emblem when represented alongside the rampant lion. The two lions appear to be holding up the monogram – the one on the left with its left paw, the one on the right with its right one – although the two paws are not portrayed, since they are hiding behind the monogram. This act of appropriation clearly denotes a strong connection between the lions and the title name of the church.

Contrary to previous interpretations, which read these rampant lions as connected to the Lusignan family,¹¹⁴ we suggest that these two lions are, rather, related to the Acciaiuoli family. A rampant lion is used as the coat of arms in the shield of Franco/Francesco Acciaiuoli, the last duke of Athens (1455-56), in the lunette fresco of the Virgin of the Catalans, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (inv. N. BXM 1111) (Fig. 40). The fresco, dating to the middle of the fifteenth century, originally decorated a doorway of the church of the Prophet Elijah, Athens. The lunette shows a depiction of the Hodegetria with two shields on her left and right. On the left there is the coat of arms of the Acciaiuoli. On the right there is a shield with the coat of arms of Lorenzo/Leonardo Spinola (died 1453).¹¹⁵ The two lions in the

¹¹³ See blazon A13 in 'Famiglia ACCIAIOLI (Fasc. 7)'.

¹¹⁴ Cfr. Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά', esp. 104.

¹¹⁵ *Byzantine Collections. The Permanent Exhibition*, 184-85 fig. 124; Drandaki, Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and Tourta, *Heaven & Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, vol. I, 314-15 cat. n. 164.

plaque of the Peribleptos closely resemble the rampant lions employed in the coat of arms of the Acciaiuoli, as shown in several renditions of their emblem in Italian sources: for example, the marble plaque with two rampant lions from the family palace in Florence (Fig. 60); different painted versions of their coat of arms on Florentine manuscripts; and a lion on an early sixteenth-century polychrome glazed circular terracotta relief by the workshop of Giovanni Della Robbia (Fig. 61).¹¹⁶

The reason the association with the Lusignan family is weak is also because their coat of arms includes - critically – the four crosses of the Jerusalem Kingdom, as seen in the monogram of Isabelle de Lusignan sculpted on a marble architrave that was found in the precinct of the Metropolis by Millet, now preserved in the museum in Mystras, and which we will discuss later (Fig. 62).¹¹⁷ At the time of her presence in Mystras as wife of the despot, Isabelle de Lusignan's coat of arms was very much standardized, and, had it been employed, it would have been rendered in the highly codified and recognizable fashion seen in that marble architrave. In the emblems employed in the Peribleptos, the rampant lions of the Peribleptos are not similar to the ones of the Lusignan coat of arms. Not only does the lion in the latter usually feature a crown, clearly distinguishable in the coinage of the Lusignan of Cyprus (Fig. 85A-C, Fig. 86) – which we will discuss later,¹¹⁸ – while less so on the carving of the architrave in the Mystras Museum, but also the four crosses of Jerusalem are completely missing from the Peribleptos.

¹¹⁶ On the glazed circular terracotta see Allan Marquand, *Robbia Heraldry*, Princeton Monographs in Art and Archaeology, 7 (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1919), 111-12, n. 134, fig. 109.

¹¹⁷ See below II.3 - The architrave – Isabelle de Lusignan's agency, 97-108.

¹¹⁸ See below II.3 - The architrave – Isabelle de Lusignan's agency, 107-107

In conclusion, we have shown that the representation of the woman in the double portrait is unusual compared to other female portraits in Mystras, both for the rendition and pose of the figure, and for the unusual setting of two unidentified aristocrats, suggesting an association with Isabelle de Lusignan. We have also shown how stone decoration in the church suggests an association with Bartholomea Acciaiuoli. The cumulative effect of all these indices is to vehicle the agency of the two wives of the Despots in the Peribleptos. Furthermore, they place their family emblems – clearly representing Latin families – on this church, indexing not just their social role in the community, but also their political role in the Despotate. The fact that they were allowed to do so, alongside their husbands, is an indication of how valuable their presence was.

This is not unique. After Constantine XI was widowed in 1442 and crowned emperor in 1449, Sphrantzes was charged with finding him a new wife. He began negotiations with George VIII of Georgia, who offered his daughter in marriage, including a dowry of a one time sum of 36,000 florins and an annual payment of 3,000 florins to conduct acts of patronage for churches, the poor and other causes of her choosing.¹¹⁹ As we have seen in the introduction, Bartholomea Acciaiuoli brought significant financial resources with her to the Despotate, while Isabelle de Lusignan was an important diplomatic agent in the region at a time when Cyprus was still a central player. The Peribleptos carries a collection of indices of the agency of Latin *basilissai* in Mystras.

¹¹⁹ Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XXXII-2, 114-15.

II.3 The architrave – Isabelle de Lusignan’s agency

A clear connection to Isabelle de Lusignan can be established in the case of a decorated stone found in the courtyard of the Metropolis, fractured in two fragments, preserved in the Museum of Mystras (Fig. 62 – Fig. 69A-B).¹²⁰ A third fragment, now employed as *spolia* inside the *naos* of the Metropolis (Fig. 70 - Fig. 72), also contributes to this attribution.

The first two stone blocks were carved out of a larger grey marble block (Fig. 62). Both measure 21.0 cm in width, 19.0 cm in height, and are now reassembled in the museum display, organized in a left and a right piece. The left piece is 56.5 cm long and the right piece is 47.5 cm long. The two fragments together, despite the missing small fragments from the middle of the block, have a total length of roughly 110.0 cm (Fig. 62). The block’s transversal section is a trapezoid (Fig. 63 – Fig. 65). The front has carved decorations, the bottom is flat and undecorated, and the top shows marks indicating it was meant to be mounted along other stone components or, alternatively, mounted with metal graphs to a masonry structure (Fig. 65).

The two fragments were found in different moments within the metropolitan complex. According to Gabriel Millet the first of the two stone blocks was found ‘on the floor near the wall surrounding the Metropolis, to the southwest corner, next to a wide arch’.¹²¹ The second was found by a collaborator of Millet in 1905, while

¹²⁰ The two stone-carved fragments are exhibited in the Mystras Museum (Inv. Nos. 1207, 1208), see *The City of Mystras*, 183-84 cat. n. 29. They are also discussed in Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement’, 2013, 238-39 fig. 210; Nicholas Melvani, *Late Byzantine Sculpture, Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages* ; v. 6 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), esp. 24-25, 135, 138 n. 28.

¹²¹ Millet, ‘Inscriptions inédites de Mistra’, 453–59.

working in the same location on the masonry of the wall surrounding the metropolitan complex, inserted into the masonry as a re-used construction piece.¹²²

The two stone blocks could have been part of a stone architrave topping either a portal or an entryway, meant for use but then discarded, and subsequently used as building material. In the secondary literature, the two stone blocks are identified as part of a lintel from a *templon* screen in the *katholikon* of the Peribleptos monastery.¹²³ However, there is no evidence supporting this assumption. Based on the location of the finding and their shape, the two blocks could have been employed for a portal or a doorway of the metropolitan complex measuring roughly 110 cm, the same as the overall length of the assembled stone architrave.¹²⁴

Comparing the transverse section of the architrave with the one employed in the *templon* of Hagios Demetrios,¹²⁵ or with those from *templa* found in other churches in Mystras¹²⁶, confirms that it is larger than architraves used for *templa*, and lacks the longitudinal rim put in place to hold a second *templon* stone tier, or the lower part of *templon* icons. Examples of this rim can be seen in the *templon* of the Metropolis itself and in the architrave, decorated on two sides with equestrian saints, and, at the centre, with an interlaced cross, that is now displayed in the courtyard of the

¹²² Millet, 'Inscriptions inédites de Mistra', 453-54.

¹²³ *The City of Mystras*, 183. On the attribution of the architrave to Peribleptos *templon*, see Ασπασία Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Τό γλυπτό «προσκυνητάρι» στο ναό του Αγίου Γεωργίου του Κάστρου στο Γεράκι', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 25 (2004): 111-26, esp. 104 and 104 n. 15. In this article there is no reference to Millet's account on the findings of the two blocks, see footnote n. 121.

¹²⁴ The architrave might have been meant for the portal of the courtyard in front of the Metropolis or for one of the entrances to the *naos* of the church either on the ground floor from the door on the northeast wall, or on the upper level on the door on the northwest upper wall. The measured plans of the upper and lower levels of the church of Hagios Demetrios can be found in Μαρίνου, *Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά*, 74 σχέδ. 8, 104 σχέδ. 10.

¹²⁵ Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 45 ns. 1-4.

¹²⁶ See for instance the architrave in the *templon* of the Peribleptos as in Millet, pl. 49 ns. 3-4.

Metropolis, but was originally from the church of the Dormition of Theotokos in the centre of the nearby village of Magoula (Fig. 73A-D).¹²⁷

The fully decorated front of the architrave consists of a long triple lined thread, interlacing in four portions of the surface (Fig. 62, Fig. 74). The thread interlaces creating a decorative motif of a binding ribbon, sometimes described as *lemniskos*.¹²⁸ Similar decorative patterns can be found in many configurations, both on sculptural reliefs, mosaics and painted decorations. In Mystras, it is featured in the mosaic floor decorations inside the *naos* of the Metropolis,¹²⁹ and in many stone slabs and architrave fragments from the same church as well as others (Fig. 75).¹³⁰

This decorative pattern is obtained by carving the outer layers of a stone block to create the design, and by drilling small holes to designate the free ends of the ribbons. The motif is often used to suggest that the ribbons are figuratively holding in place other decorative elements such as rosettes and crosses.¹³¹ Even though not unusual in the regional context of Morea, this interlaced pattern shows a sculptural treatment similar to those on architraves found in other areas of the Adriatic and Mediterranean. Examples with similar, but not identical, *lemniskos* decorations can be found above the main entrance of the church of Hagios Sotiras, in Kato

¹²⁷ The architrave with the interlaced cross bears the Mystras Museum inv. no.1603. This information had been provided by Mr Panagiotis Perdikoulis from the Ephorate of Lakonia in Sparta.

¹²⁸ Λασκαρίνα Μπούρα, *Ο γλυπτός διάκοσμος του ναού της Παναγίας στο μοναστήρι του Οσίου Λουκά* (Αθήνα, 1980), 107-108.

¹²⁹ Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 44 n. 18.

¹³⁰ See a selection of these stone slabs and architraves in the Museum of Mystras as in Millet, pls. 47-8, 50-1.

¹³¹ See for instance stone slabs and architraves in the Museum of Mystras as in Millet, pl. 50 ns. 1-3, 5, 10, 14.

Gardenitsa in the Mani peninsula (Fig. 76).¹³² The rendition of the motif, especially on the details of curls of the free ends of the ribbons, resembles the surface treatment of the architrave topping the entrance to the *naos* of the Little Metropolis in Athens (Fig. 77).¹³³

The sculptural rendition of the decorative motif is sophisticated, and matches the interlaced motif decorating other monuments in the Morea, such as the decorative patterns of the carved screen in the Church of Saint George in the Geraki Castle (Fig. 78).¹³⁴ At the same time, the motif on the architrave from Mystras shows formal similarities with the ribbons creating a cross at the bottom of the marble *proskynetarion* decorated with an icon of Christ enthroned, originally from the church of the Peribleptos and now in the Museum of Mystras (Fig. 79, Fig. 80).¹³⁵ This relief icon and its inlaid decorations have been linked to Western influence.¹³⁶

The well-rendered decoration on the architrave also bears another distinctive feature. The binding ribbons stretching across the whole of the front function as a single device (Fig. 62, Fig. 74). The ribbons seem to be holding in place three roundels, one

¹³² Δρανδάκης, 'Σχεδιάσμα καταλόγου των τοιχογραφημένων Βυζαντινών και Μεταβυζαντινών Ναών Λακωνίας', esp. 228 n. 407.

¹³³ On the Little Metropolis, see Henry Maguire, 'The Cage of Crosses: ancient and medieval sculptures on the "Little Metropolis" in Athens (Originally published in Thymiamata ste mneme tes Laskarinas Boura. [Athens, 1994])', in *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art*, 1998, IX-169–72; Bente Kiilerich, 'Making Sense of the Spolia in the Little Metropolis in Athens', *Arte Medievale* anno IV, 2 (2005): 95–114.

¹³⁴ On the carved screen in the church of Hagios Demetrios in Geraki, see Γεώργιος Δημητροκάλλης, *Γεράκι Οί τοιχογραφίες τῶν ναῶν τοῦ Κάστρου* (Αθήνα: [χ.ε.], 2001), esp. 75-83; Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Τό γλυπτό «προσκυνητάρυ» στό ναό τοῦ Αγίου Γεωργίου τοῦ Κάστρου στό Γεράκι'; Gerstel, 'The Morea', esp. 303.

¹³⁵ The marble *proskynetarion* is dated to the second half of the fourteenth century. It was found on the south side narthex of the Peribleptos. It is now in the Museum of Mystras. Inv. No. 1166. See *The City of Mystras*, 178-80 cat. n. 27. The most recent discussion on this marble icon is on Drandaki, Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and Tourta, *Heaven & Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, vol. I, 313-14 cat. n. 163.

¹³⁶ Drandaki, Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and Tourta, *Heaven & Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, vol. I p. 314.

on the left portion of the architrave, one at its the centre, and one on its right. The two on the sides are well preserved; the one in the centre is broken along the middle vertical line (Fig. 69A-B). The left and right roundels delimit two monograms (Fig. 66, Fig. 67), while the one in the centre bears a coat of arms (Fig. 68).

The letters in the first of the two monograms read ζαμπεα, and the second ντε λεζηνανω. Together, as Millet suggests implying the repetition of the letter “v”, they read as ζαμπεα ντε λεζηνανω, *sabea de lezenano* (Fig. 66, Fig. 67). The name Ζαμπέα appears in the *Chronicle of Morea* and refers to Isabelle de Lusignan, whose name was transliterated into Greek in the monograms.¹³⁷

The central roundel is divided in two portions both bearing heraldic insignia (Fig. 68). The left portion depicts a crowned rampant lion, while the right portion has the remains of the vertical and right arms of a cross, with two small crosses above and below the right arm. Recomposing the two parts allows to decipher the coat of arms of the Lusignan families of Little-Armenia and Cyprus: the rampant lion as a unifying visual emblem for the different branches of the dynasty, and the Jerusalem cross associated with the emblem of the King of Cyprus.¹³⁸

Associating the name of a ruler, as Isabelle was, with a stone inscription usually implies an act of patronage or dedication of a building. The architrave, then, was prepared to commemorate a foundation act or an intervention on an existing

¹³⁷ Millet, ‘Inscriptions inédites de Mistra’, esp. 454.

¹³⁸ See for instance the obverse on the silver gros of Isabelle’s cousin Peter I de Lusignan (1359-1369) in George Francis Hill, *A History of Cyprus: The Frankish Period, 1192–1432*, vol. 2, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 308 fig. 6. Also see the Lusignan’s gold *besants*, and silver *gorsses* in Jannic Durand and Dorota Giovannoni, eds., *Chypre: entre Byzance et l’Occident, IVe - XVIe siècle* (Paris: Louvre éditions, 2012), 190-93 cat. nn. 73-7, 200-202 cat. nn. 83-6.

building. Even if its exact position can only be suggested, the architrave with Isabelle de Lusignan's monograms was commissioned to mark her patronage. In sponsoring the construction or restoration of a building she merged two traditions: Byzantine, by having two roundels with Greek transliteration of her name, and Latin, by having her coat of arms as an appropriating act. Associating a patron to a building, or to different artefacts, by means of a visual insignia was frequent practice in the Latin/Catholic context of the time, while finding progressive affirmation in the late Byzantine Empire – especially with the double-headed eagle of the Palaiologan coat of arms. Due to this practice, by the second half of the fourteenth century, the coat of arms of different branches of the Lusignan dynasty were in use in different polities linked to the dynasty. Henry II of Cyprus (1285-1324) for instance used a combination of the rampant lion and the Jerusalem Cross in one of his *gros petits* (Fig. 81).¹³⁹

The coat of arms on the architrave in the museum of Mystras can be linked to several coins related to the Lusignan of Cyprus, as well as to the coat of arms of other related families, such as the Durazzo of Naples. The two families were linked by the marriage of the king of Naples Ladislao I of Durazzo (1377-1414) and Mary de Lusignan (1381-1404). An example of the Durazzo's coat of arms features in the tempera *cassone* panel by Master of Charles of Durazzo in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 51, Fig. 52).¹⁴⁰ The panel shows the conquest of the city of

¹³⁹ D. M. Metcalf, 'The Gros Grand and the Gros Petit of Henry II of Cyprus: PART I', *The Numismatic Chronicle* 142 (1982): 83–100, 98 and pl. 23 n. 15: A/1.

¹⁴⁰ On the cassone by the Master of Durazzo, see John Pope-Hennessy and Keith Christiansen, 'Secular Painting in 15th-Century Tuscany: Birth Trays, Cassone Panels, and Portraits', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 38, no. 1 (1980): 3–64, esp. 20-3; Cristelle Louise Baskins, *The Triumph of Marriage: Painted Cassoni of the Renaissance* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2008), esp. fig. 14a and catalogue entry by Virginia Brilliant; Luciana Mocciola, 'La presa di Napoli di Carlo III di Durazzo nel pannello del Metropolitan Museum', in *La battaglia nel*

Naples in 1381 by Charles of Durazzo and includes depictions of the coat of arms combining the Durazzo and the Jerusalem Cross (Fig. 52).¹⁴¹ This combination has historical relevance since it shows that, in the decades when Isabelle was associating herself with the coat of arms of the King of Cyprus and Jerusalem, in Italy Charles of Durazzo, in promoting himself, was using a similar coat of arms, also bearing the Jerusalem Cross (Fig. 52).¹⁴²

Isabelle was engaged in a programme of appropriation, using a blended form of her insignia – both the coat of arms and her name – to index to the communities residing in Mystras her political and social agency. The architrave shows the *basilissa*, promoting her role through the most durable medium possible. Similar acts of self-promotion via visual and iconic sculpted programmes were pursued by other Byzantine rulers in other contexts such as Arta and Trebizond.¹⁴³ Indices such as Isabelle de Lusignan's name, written in Greek monograms and associated with her coat of arms, were not unfamiliar to her Cypriot background – we saw a similar expression in the decorated details of the wooden templon of the church of Hagios Ioannis Lampadistis, in Kalopanagiotis (Fig. 49) – and reflected other known female patronage acts associated with her large and influential family. Particularly significant in this sense is the case of Maria d'Enghien-Brienne (1369-1446), countess of Lecce, who became queen of Naples after marrying, in 1407, the king of

Rinascimento meridionale: moduli narrativi tra parole e immagini, ed. Giancarlo Abbamonte (Roma: Viella, 2011), 57–67.

¹⁴¹ Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Orient latin*, pl. VI 17.

¹⁴² From June 1381, Charles had already been invested by Pope Urban VI as the King of Sicily and Jerusalem, as well as King of Naples and Gonfalonier of the Church, see 'CARLO III d'Angiò Durazzo, re di Napoli, detto della Pace, o il Piccolo in "Dizionario Biografico"', accessed 31 October 2017, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-iii-d-angio-durazzo-re-di-napoli-detto-della-pace-o-il-piccolo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-iii-d-angio-durazzo-re-di-napoli-detto-della-pace-o-il-piccolo_(Dizionario-Biografico)). See also, David Abulafia, 'The Italian South', in *New Cambridge Medieval History Vol. 6 c.1300-c.1415*, ed. Michael Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 488–514, esp. 512–13.

¹⁴³ Melvani, *Late Byzantine Sculpture*, esp. 151–54.

Naples Ladislao I of Durazzo (1377-1414), previously married to Isabelle's third cousin, Mary of Lusignan.¹⁴⁴

Maria d'Enghien-Brienne, while not directly linked to the Lusignan family, was part of a dynastic environment where the use of emblems was highly codified and broadly understood.¹⁴⁵ Her first husband, Raimondo (Raimondello) Orsini Del Balzo (1350/5-1406), prince of Taranto,¹⁴⁶ sponsored the construction of the church of Saint Catherine of Galatina, Apulia, in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.¹⁴⁷

Maria was alongside her husband Raimondo while he was at war against King Ladislao I. In 1406 Raimondo died, and Maria d'Enghien-Brienne married Ladislao himself so as to end the war. After becoming queen of Naples in 1407, she completed and decorated the church of Saint Catherine, and Raimondo's funerary monument was included in the apsidal area of the church. The marriage of Maria and Ladislao was signalled by two indices, which remain on the façade of the church, mirroring those used by Isabelle de Lusignan in her architrave in Mystras. First, Maria d'Enghien-Brienne used her coat of arms, merging her own emblems with those of the Durazzo, to decorate the glass roundel above the portal of the church, at the centre of the rose window decorating the main façade (Fig. 82). Second, a Greek inscription was carved above the right entrance to the church (Fig. 84).¹⁴⁸ As was the

¹⁴⁴ Mary of Lusignan (1381-1404) was the daughter of James I de Lusignan (1334-1398), King of Cyprus and titular King of Armenia Cilicia and Jerusalem (1382-1398), and Isabelle's second cousin.

¹⁴⁵ Alessandro Cutolo, *Maria d'Enghien* (Galatina: Congedo, 1977), esp. 33-54; Isabelle Ortega, *Les lignages nobiliaires dans la Morée latine (XIIIe - XVe siècle). Permanences et mutations* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), esp. 594-97, 631.

¹⁴⁶ Kristjan Toomaspoeg, 'Orsini Del Balzo, Raimondo', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 79 (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2013), 732-35.

¹⁴⁷ Cosimo D. Poso, 'La fondazione di Santa Caterina: scelta devozionale e committenza artistica di Raimondo Orsini del Balzo', in *Dal Gilgio all'Orso: i Principi d'Angiò e Orsini del Balzo nel Salento*, ed. Antonio Cassiano and Benedetto Vetere (Lecce, 2006), 194-223.

¹⁴⁸ The inscription reads '+Ενταυθα εστιν η καππελλα τ[ῆς] ... α[γίας] Κατ[ερίνας] / ... εντος και ... ρθ ...', 'Here is the chapel of Saint Catherine / ... inside and ...', in Linda Safran, *The Medieval*

case for Isabelle, Maria chose to communicate her role as ruler to the Greek-speaking and Orthodox community of Galatina in Salento,¹⁴⁹ while identifying with them through their language in the inscription. At the same time, by combining her own title with that of Naples, she presented herself as responsible for bringing a resolution to the conflict.

Maria d'Enghien-Brienne marked her presence also inside the church, by inserting the arms of d'Angiò Durazzo and d'Enghien Brienne in the frescoed decoration on the inside façade wall, below the rose window, above the central portal (Fig. 83). Other female members of her family did the same, such as her niece, Caterina Orsini Del Balzo, who used her arms on the decoration of an early fifteenth-century chalice now in the Museo Diocesano, in Bitonto, Apulia.¹⁵⁰

Isabelle was certainly embracing a broader fashion of the period, in which heraldic images were associated with the general idea of the West, and which was adopted by the Byzantine elites of Constantinople and other major centres of the Empire.¹⁵¹ Examples of this fashion, specific to the use of the fleur-de-lis as a decorative sculpted motif rather than a specific statement, include fragments of reliefs from the churches of the Chora and Kyriotissa Monasteries in Constantinople, and the church

Salento: Art and Identity in Southern Italy, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 275.

¹⁴⁹ Graham A. Loud, 'Latins, Greeks and Non-Christians', in *The Latin Church in Norman Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 494–520, esp. 510–11.

¹⁵⁰ Corinna T. Gallori, 'The Late Trecento in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme Napoleone and Nicola Orsini, the Carthusians, and the triptych of Saint Gregory', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 58, no. 2 (2016): 172 fig. 9.

¹⁵¹ Robert G. Ousterhout, 'Byzantium between East and West and the Origins of Heraldry', in *Byzantine Art: Recent Studies*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 153–70, esp. 157–59.

of the Paregoretissa in Arta.¹⁵² In the late thirteenth-century interior decoration of the latter, the use of such decorative motif was also accompanied by other sculpted decorations, on arches, column bases and slabs, representing mythical animals, human figures, beasts linked to Italian thirteenth century art of Puglia and Athens.¹⁵³

While we agree with Robert Ousterhout when he points out, of this fashion, that ‘we might describe the rampant lion as “heraldic”, for the Byzantine audience it connoted power and prestige only in a general way’,¹⁵⁴ in the case of Isabelle’s use of a crown rampant lion in Mystras, with or without a sword, it was not a generic act to associate her family with a patronage act, but a way of transferring the authority of her role at court into a signal of her power. As a powerful foreigner at the court, it must have had a stronger directness and specificity.

A fragment of a marble carved slab similarly represents this transfer, and can be linked to the architrave with Isabelle’s monogram. Used today as a *spolia* inside the *naos* of the Metropolis (Fig. 70 – Fig. 72) the fragment was part of larger stone slab, the proportions and dimensions of which indicate that it was a parapet slab, similar to those employed in the parapets of the gallery of the church *in situ* today. The decorative motif shows a rampant lion, holding a sword in its paw. Although the fragment is fractured and we cannot verify whether the head of the lion was crowned, the carefully rendered details of the body suggest the heraldry of the Lusignan, as shown for instance in the use of the iconography of the lion in the *deniers* issued by King Peter II (1369-1382) or by James I de Lusignan (1382-1398)

¹⁵² For a discussion on the use of the fleur-de-lis as a decorative motif in Arta and Constantinople, see Melvani, *Late Byzantine Sculpture*, esp. 24.

¹⁵³ Melvani, esp. 103-4.

¹⁵⁴ Ousterhout, ‘Byzantium between East and West and the Origins of Heraldry’, 159.

(Fig. 85A-B).¹⁵⁵ The iconographic detail of the sword can be an added attribute, referring either to the sword included on the obverse of the issues of silver *gros* coins by Peter I de Lusignan (Fig. 85C) or to the depiction of the sword in the coinage of the Constantine II, King of Cilicia, and father to Isabelle.¹⁵⁶

The crowned rampant lion and the Jerusalem Cross were already employed as heraldic emblems in the first stable emission of Cypriot silver *gros* around 1315, during the reign of King Henry II Lusignan (1285-1324),¹⁵⁷ granduncle of Isabelle, as well as in the silver *gros* of King Hugh IV Lusignan (1324-1359), her first cousin once removed (Fig. 86).¹⁵⁸ The first half of the fourteenth century, during the reigns of both Henry II and Hugh IV, registered a particularly abundant coin emission, implying a large diffusion of Cypriot silver *gros*.¹⁵⁹ Silver coins were the most important coinage for trades in the eastern Mediterranean, and the increase in issuance of the Cypriot *gros* gave centrality to the Kingdom.

The use of the coat of arms of the Lusignan was not only a direct index of the association between a certain issuer to the family, but it was also a way to emphasise rulership and authority in an economic context where individuals from multiple social, linguistic and religious backgrounds interacted in regional trade. By transliterating her name into Greek and using the coat of arms of her family, Isabelle

¹⁵⁵ 'AE Denier. Peter II, 1369-1382 | History and Culture of Cypriot Medieval Coins', accessed 13 September 2017, <http://numismatics-medieval.dioptra.cyi.ac.cy/?q=content/ae-denier-peter-ii-1369-1382>; 'Billon Denier. James I, 1382-1398 | History and Culture of Cypriot Medieval Coins', accessed 13 September 2017, <http://numismatics-medieval.dioptra.cyi.ac.cy/?q=content/billon-denier-james-i-1382-1398-1>.

¹⁵⁶ 'Coins-Views-Fields | History and Culture of Cypriot Medieval Coins -Peter I', accessed 13 September 2017, http://numismatics-medieval.dioptra.cyi.ac.cy/?q=coins-views-fields&field_period_tid=31&field_issue_authority_tid=12&field_mint_tid=All&field_denomination_tid=All&field_material_tid=All.

¹⁵⁷ Durand and Giovannoni, *Chypre*, esp. 200-202 cat. nn. 83-5.

¹⁵⁸ Durand and Giovannoni, esp. 201-202 cat. n. 85.

¹⁵⁹ Durand and Giovannoni, esp. 201.

was presenting herself as a unifying ruler capable of bridging the Byzantine court of Mystras and the Latin Kingdom of Cyprus.

Her mark on the architrave – her Greek name – is the equivalent visual strategy her cousin Hugh IV used while impressing the family coat of arms on a metal bowl, now held at the L.A. Mayer Museum of Islamic Art in Jerusalem (Fig. 87).¹⁶⁰ The bowl is made of a copper alloy, with silver inlays and engraving. It is a metal vessel decorated with floral motifs and an Arabic inscription, and is decorated with the coat of arms of Hugh IV de Lusignan. A platter from the Musée du Louvre in copper alloy, with silver, gold, and black-paste inlays, also with heraldic device of the Lusignan, has an Arabic inscription of good wishes. Even though these objects were probably meant for the Western market, the use of a family mark on an object originating from the Arabic-speaking regions – both objects are from either Syria or Egypt – suggests that the family arms of the Lusignan indicated their intermediary role with the Mamluk elites, and positioned the family as an international power.¹⁶¹

II.4 Latin *basilissai*'s agency indexed in depicted fashion

Having established that Bartholomea and Isabelle were agents in the context of the built environment, we now turn to finding indices of this agency in the broader visual programme available in Mystras. Fashion, as represented in portraits, gives us an opportunity to detect such agency.

¹⁶⁰ Barbara Drake Boehm and Melanie Holcomb, eds., *Jerusalem, 1000-1400: Every People under Heaven* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 48 cat. n.19b.

¹⁶¹ Boehm and Holcomb, 48 cat. n.19a.

These women resided in Mystras and were accompanied by a small court. Evidence of their presence is attested by Western garments found in burials of the church of Hagia Sophia, the palace church of the Despots (Fig. 88A-B, Fig. 89A-B).¹⁶² Braudel has noted that ‘the history of costume is less anecdotal than would appear. It touches on every issue – raw materials, production processes, manufacturing costs, cultural stability, fashion and social hierarchy. Subject to incessant change, costume everywhere is a persistent reminder of social position’.¹⁶³ This section examines how textiles and styles associated with Western garments associated with these women, were prototypes for representation in frescoed portraits.

Most female donor portraits in the city show women either with a monastic garment, as nuns, or with a very conventional full length Byzantine *maphorion*, covering the entire figure from the neck down, with triangular cut sleeves, as seen in the depiction of the female donor in Aī-Giannaki and her daughter, or in the donor portrait in the Peribleptos (Fig. 4, Fig. 26). There are many comparative examples of this type of female dress in the fourteenth-century Byzantine world. A few notable examples include: the *maphorion* worn by Theodora Synadene and Euphrosyne Palaiologina, from the frontispiece of the Typikon of the Monastery of Our Lady of Sure Hope, [Lincoln College, Oxford (Ms. Gr. 35, fols. 2r, 6v)] (c. 1300 with later additions) (Fig. 17, Fig. 90);¹⁶⁴ Maria Tournikina Akropolitissa depicted on the silver revetment of an icon of the Hodegetria in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (early fourteenth

¹⁶² See in general Αιμιλία Μπακούρου and Marielle Martiniani-Reber, eds., *Parure d'une princesse byzantine: tissus archéologiques de Sainte-Sophie de Mistra. Το ένδυμα μιας βυζαντινής πριγκίπισσας: Αρχαιολογικά υφάσματα από την Αγία Σοφία του Μυστρά* (Genève: Musées d'art et d'histoire, 2000).

¹⁶³ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), vol. I, 311. See also Susan Mosher Stuard, *Gilding the Market Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), esp. 15, 15 n. 54.

¹⁶⁴ Hutter, ‘Die Geschichte des Lincoln College Typikons’, esp. 82, 85; Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period’, esp. 80, 82, fig. 47.

century) (Fig. 91);¹⁶⁵ the portrait of Anna, daughter of Melas, 1355, church of the Anastasis of Christ, Berroia, Greece (Fig. 92).¹⁶⁶

However, some frescoed portraits do not conform to this tradition, and rather reflect the garments and fashion transmitted by the international relations and trade that these women represented. Their presence was associated with commercial, cultural and political exchanges that had been established with the West. For example, as pointed out by Hans Belting and Cecily Hilsdale, the trade of silk – one of the likely fabrics depicted in the frescoes – was an important vector of mutual influences between East and West, to the point that it became one of the most important conduits of cultural and political exchanges between diverse political actors, almost a *lingua franca* spoken by many diverse entities active in the Empire after 1204.¹⁶⁷

The late Byzantine silk trade was an important vehicle for the transmission of artistic agency, in part because it enabled the transmission of patterns and motifs.¹⁶⁸

Regardless of the origin of the materials, one could identify the provenance of specific types of textiles. For example, according to Jacoby, one can distinguish between textiles that were embroidered with gold thread, such as the example in the manuscript cover with Palaiologoi monograms, in the Badia Greca of Grottaferrata in

¹⁶⁵ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, esp. 332 cat. n. 39.

¹⁶⁶ Stancioiu, 'Objects and Identity: An Analysis of Some Material Remains of the Latin and Orthodox Residents of Late Medieval Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete', esp. 168.

¹⁶⁷ Hans Belting, ed., *Il Medio Oriente e l'Occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo. Le Proche-Orient et l'Occident dans l'art du XIIIe siècle. Near East and West in 13th century art* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1982), esp. 3; Cecily J. Hilsdale, 'The Imperial Image at the End of Exile: The Byzantine Embroidered Silk in Genoa and the Treaty of Nymphaion (1261)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 64 (2010): 151–99. On the trade of silk and its cultural implication, see David Jacoby, 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 197–240; Jacoby, 'Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture', esp. 26 and 38 n.38. Belting [Ed] 1982, p. 3 ; Hilsdale 2010

¹⁶⁸ Jacoby, 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction'.

Italy (Fig. 93).¹⁶⁹ This was a product of Constantinople, even though the golden thread used to produce the embroidery was from Venice, Genoa, Lucca or Provence in the period after the twenties of fourteenth century. These types of textiles were produced in Constantinople and were used for elaborate costumes, for example that worn by the figure on the left of the Tomb F in the exonarthex of the *katholikon* of the Chora Monastery (Fig. 19). But, below this outer garment, that same figure wears another garment made of brocade with pomegranate motifs, which is of Italian production in this period. The latter textile is the same as that found in the tomb in Mystras, which we will introduce next.

II.4.a Traces of female fashion in archaeological and pictorial record

In 1955, on the south side of the church of Hagia Sophia under the portico that connects the chapel on the southeast to the chapel on the southwest, Nikolaos Drandakes conducted archaeological soundings that brought to the surface a sequence of tombs. Towards the first of November 1955, to the north of the third tomb starting from the west, another vaulted tomb was found in the series of tombs close to the wall to the north. In opening it he found the remains of several entombed bodies, one on top of the other. The chest of the last body buried was covered by garment fragments. The remains were those of a woman, wearing a diadem in her hair, and fragments of a garment.¹⁷⁰ What was left of these garments was found both in front and behind the body, suggesting that the deceased had been wearing them when she was entombed (Fig. 88A, Fig. 89A-B).

¹⁶⁹ Jacoby, 'Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture', esp. 26-7 and fig. 26.

¹⁷⁰ Nikolaos B. Drandakes, 'La sepulture d'une «princesse» de Byzance: données de fouilles.', in *Parure d'une princesse byzantine: tissus archéologiques de Sainte-Sophie de Mistra* (Genève: Musées d'art et d'histoire, 2000), 27.

This must have been an aristocratic woman, given that the church of Hagia Sophia is associated with the despot's Palace. It was part of the monastery of the Zoodotes, where Theodora Tocco and Cleophe Malatesti were buried.¹⁷¹ However, whether or not this person was in fact a member of the imperial family is impossible to ascertain. Given the nature of the garments and the crowding of the tomb, while the person was an aristocrat, it is unlikely she would have been directly linked to the despot.¹⁷²

The fragments of fabric were found to belong to three textiles and two garments. The first textile was found closest to the body and was part of the first garment, a taffeta silk chemise decorated with a lozenge motif (Fig. 89 A-B). On the basis of the decoration of the chemise and of its shape, a dalmatic tunic with long sleeves, we can deduce that it employed textiles similar to those of Spanish origin preserved in the treasuries of Western churches, such as the fragment of silk taffeta found inside a sarcophagus in the Saint-Pierre Cathedral in Geneva (Fig. 94).¹⁷³ Thus the shirt is possibly of Spanish origin, and one could speculate that this is because of the Catalan merchants in Greece or, more likely, because of the presence of Venetian traders.¹⁷⁴

There were then two fabrics that made up the second, heavier garment: a lining attached to another fragment of silk damask, the two interwoven at the edges (Fig.

¹⁷¹ Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XXI.12, 72-3.

¹⁷² Pari Kalamara, 'Le costume à Mistra à la fin de la période Paléologue: données provenant de la fouille des tombes de Sainte Sophie', in *Parure d'une princesse byzantine: tissus archéologiques de Sainte-Sophie de Mistra* (Genève: Musées d'art et d'histoire, 2000), 105-12, esp. 107.

¹⁷³ Marielle Martiniani-Reber, 'Identification des tissus archeologiques de Mistra: origine et datation', in *Parure d'une princesse byzantine: tissus archéologiques de Sainte-Sophie de Mistra* (Genève: Musées d'art et d'histoire, 2000), 87-98, esp. 87, 89 n. 15 and 91 ill. 20.

¹⁷⁴ Martiniani-Reber, esp. 87.

88B). The silk damask also shows a decorative motif, and it has been possible to reconstruct the shape of this second garment.¹⁷⁵ It is a sleeveless full-length robe, with a low V-shaped neckline at the front, and a round neck-line at the back. It is also tight on the waist, so as to cling to the torso. The decorative motif is made of lobed medallions with palmettes and ogival compartments.¹⁷⁶ This decoration, along with the cut of the garment, reminds us of Italian and Spanish textiles of the first half of the fifteenth century. Examples close to these in terms of decorative motif can be found in the museum of Palace Mocenigo in Venice (Fig. 95),¹⁷⁷ as well as on the green brocaded drape found in the tomb of Cangrande I della Scala in Verona (Fig. 96).¹⁷⁸

Given the design, it is likely that the burial took place in the spring or summer. A will from 1409, which lists garments a husband had left to his bride in Ravenna, describes a typical fourteenth-century female wardrobe. In that list the dress found in the tomb is called a *cotta* or *giornea*, in silk or brocade, used in the summer or for special occasions.¹⁷⁹ A *giornea* was an over-garment with ornamental sleeves open in front and tight at the waist, which started as a male garment but was worn by women from the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹⁸⁰

This archaeological find is unique in the Peloponnese, and allows us to say that textiles of Venetian import, and associated Italian designs, were unequivocally

¹⁷⁵ Martiniani-Reber, esp. 87-8.

¹⁷⁶ Jacoby, 'Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture', esp. 33-5.

¹⁷⁷ Martiniani-Reber, 'Identification des tissus archeologiques de Mistra: origine et datation', esp. 88.

¹⁷⁸ Luigi Serra, 'La Mostra dell'antico tessuto d'arte italiano', *Bollettino d'Arte* XXXI, s. III (1938): 281-305, esp. 300-2.

¹⁷⁹ Maria G. Muzzarelli, *Guardaroba medievale: vesti e società dal XIII al XVI secolo* (Bologna: Il mulino, 1999), esp. 29.

¹⁸⁰ Muzzarelli, esp. 356.

present in Mystras in the first half of the fifteenth century. More importantly for this dissertation, it gives us a material, real element to interpret some of details of the female portraits in Mystras.

The most important representation related to the garment fragments is that of a couple portrayed on the north wall of the south chapel of the Hodegetria. This fresco is dated around the second half of the fourteenth century, and shows a man and a woman holding hands. The fresco is degraded but what can be seen is that the man, who according to Etzeoglou is a *protovestiaros*, is wearing a green garment. The woman is wearing a red dress, which appears to be designed in a Western style.¹⁸¹ It shows a narrow waist, fitted torso, and a low neckline that appears to reveal the woman's shoulders and upper chest. This detail is recognized as Italianate by Stancioiu, and specifically of Venetian context.¹⁸² The reconstructed dress from the archaeological fragment and this fresco are not identical. Unlike the fresco, the archaeological remains appear not to have sleeves. However, the cut of the body and the neckline both emphasise the female form (Table 32 Fig. 51C).

A relevant comparison for this representation is a donor portrait in the church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa in Asinou, Cyprus (Fig. 98). The portrait is in the apsidal conch of the narthex of the church. The female donor appears on the left-hand side of the fresco, kneeling with praying hands towards a representation of the Virgin of Misericordia enthroned.¹⁸³ While the dating of the portrait of the Latin donor is uncertain, Kalopissi-Verti assigns it to between the late thirteenth and the early

¹⁸¹ Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra', esp. 517.

¹⁸² Stancioiu, 'Objects and Identity: An Analysis of Some Material Remains of the Latin and Orthodox Residents of Late Medieval Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete', 182–83.

¹⁸³ Michele Bacci, 'La Madonna della Misericordia individuale', *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* XXI (N.S. 7) (2009): 171–95, esp. 177–78.

fourteenth century, associated with the presence of Latin Christian groups in de Lusignan Cyprus.¹⁸⁴ As noted by Kalopissi-Verti the woman wears, above a long white tunic, a long scarlet dress with a v-shaped neckline and long sleeves.¹⁸⁵ She also wears a long black veil, held in place by a circlet that runs from the head to the ankles. Kalopissi-Verti identifies the dress as ‘the so-called *cotte*, which appears in France in this form from the thirteenth century onward’, a dress that hangs tight onto the body whilst still producing folds.¹⁸⁶ This design does not correspond to the one seen in the Hodegetria. The latter has a tight bodice on the upper torso, below which the dress flares out just below the breasts and well above the waistline, in the Italian style of the fourteenth century, as we shall see below.

The design of a dress similar to the portrait in the Hodegetria is also used in a double funerary portrait in the church of the Saint Athanasios in Kephali – Kissamos in Crete (Fig. 99), which shows two women, Anna and Moskanna, dated 1394, wearing similar dresses.¹⁸⁷ Stancioiu takes this choice of design as an indication that these Greek women from the local upper class attempted to emulate the style of the Latin ruling class in Crete.¹⁸⁸ Another example of Italian design, although not of the same

¹⁸⁴ Susan Hatfield Young, *Byzantine Painting in Cyprus during the Early Lusignan Period*, 1983, 328-9, 362, 368-72; Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Collective patterns of patronage in the late byzantine village: the evidence of church inscriptions’, in *Donation et donateurs dans le monde byzantin* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2012), 125–40, esp. 129 n. 68.

¹⁸⁵ Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, ‘The Murals of the Narthex: The Paintings of the Late Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries’, in *Asinou across Time: Studies in the Architecture and Murals of the Panagia Phorbiotissa, Cyprus* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012), 155–208, esp. 124-30.

¹⁸⁶ Kalopissi-Verti, 125.

¹⁸⁷ Stancioiu, ‘Objects and Identity: An Analysis of Some Material Remains of the Latin and Orthodox Residents of Late Medieval Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete’, esp. 182-83.

¹⁸⁸ On the complex multi-layered ‘bi-cultural Cretan identity’ that informed the artistic production in Crete in the late period, see more recently Angeliki Lymberopoulou, ‘Regional Byzantine Monumental Art from Venetian Crete’, in *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou and Rembrandt Duits (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2013), 61–99. The quote ‘bi-cultural Cretan identity’ is in Lymberopoulou, 91. On the depiction of male and female donors in the context of Venetian-dominated Crete, particularly significant are the case studies offered by the fourteen portraits in the church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana. Here the garments of

dress, also comes from Crete. In the church of the Panagia Gouverniotissa, Potamies, a village east of Candia, two female saints – Theodora and Marina – are represented in a late fourteenth-century fresco wearing a brocade mantle: ‘they are dressed in the Italian brocart mantle which probably reflects the fashion of those days’ (Fig. 100).¹⁸⁹

II.4.b Links to Italian fashion and its representation

It is plausible that a member of the court of Mystras was represented in fresco of the Hodegetria with an Italian dress. While the ruling class in Mystras was Palaiologan, the fact that three consecutive Latin women were wives of the Despots provided the impetus for female members of the aristocratic community to represent themselves in the Italianate fashion that was emerging in the second half of the fourteenth century.

In *Gilding the Market: Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy*, Susan Mosher Stuard observes that from the 1350’s costumes changed dramatically in Italy. ‘The silhouette changed and clothes became more formfitting as well as subject to sudden whim. The simplicity of a basic garment common to men and women and differentiated only in its details gave way to close-fitting and gendered costumes where men showed off their legs in hose and women tightened their bodices,

nine men and five women are presented with high accuracy. On these portraits, see Angeliki Lymberopoulou, *Church of the Archangel Michael at Kavalariana: Art and Society on Fourteenth-Century Venetian-Dominated Crete* (London: Pindar Press, 2006), esp. 204-17. In particular for the taste of western fashion in the depiction of the garments of the male donors in Kavalariana, see Lymberopoulou, esp. 215-17.

¹⁸⁹ Maria Vassilakis-Mavrakakis, ‘The Church of the Virgin Gouverniotissa at Potamies, Crete’ (Courtauld Institute of Art University of London, 1986), 253. Also quoted in Stancioiu, ‘Objects and Identity: An Analysis of Some Material Remains of the Latin and Orthodox Residents of Late Medieval Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete’, 157.

displaying their shoulders and breasts. Embellishments further heightened the difference'.¹⁹⁰

Given the origin of the textile fragments emerged from the archaeological find, and the dominance of Venetian trade in the region, we focus, for comparison with the fresco, on products of Venetian context at the end of the fourteenth century. It is worth following how the depiction of style evolves, as it shifts significantly during the period in which the Latin *basilissai* are in Mystras.

In Venice, in the second half of the fourteenth century, donors are still often represented with loose garments. For example, donors are shown with traditional loose garments in a painted relief of Saint Donato with donors, in the church of Saints Maria and Donato, in Murano dated to 1310. Pallucchini attributes it to Paolo Veneziano as a case of early career production, although the attribution is disputed (Fig. 101).¹⁹¹ Another example of this traditional fashion is Paolo Veneziano's Madonna and Child with Doge Dandolo and his Wife between Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1339) in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Fig. 102).¹⁹² It is part of the funerary monument of Dandolo, above which this painting was placed. In the Virgin enthroned with Christ and donors at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice (dated 1325-1330) Paolo Veneziano allows the

¹⁹⁰ Stuard, *Gilding the Market Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy*, 15. See also Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible* (London: Collins, 1981), esp. Vol. I, 317; Veronica Manlow, *Designing Clothes: Culture and Organization of the Fashion Industry* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 8.

¹⁹¹ Filippo Pedrocchi, *Paolo Veneziano* (Milano: Alberto Maioli Editore, in collaborazione con Società Veneta Editrice S.V.E., 2003), 44-7, 211; Robert Gibbs, 'Paolo Veneziano', Oxford Art Online. Grove Art Online. Oxford University Press, 28 September 2017, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T065142>.

¹⁹² Pedrocchi, *Paolo Veneziano*, esp. 80-3, 164-65 cat. n. 13.

garment of the woman to be more detailed (Fig. 103).¹⁹³ This slightly more revealing representation shows the woman in a vest with side slits revealing the garments underneath.

In the middle of the thirteenth century form-fitting depictions were considered so problematic that it was used to represent Babylon the Great, the Whore of Babylon, seated on the seven-headed beast with ten horns, in the polyptych of the Apocalypse by Jacobello Alberegno (terminus post-quem 1343, in the Gallerie dell'Accademia) (Fig. 104).¹⁹⁴ Jacobello died before 1397, implying that depicting this female fashion was problematic in the second half of the century, and continued to be so for some time, as the same representation was used in the church of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria in Galatina (post-quem 1416) (Fig. 105).

If the dating of the fresco in Mystras is correct, then the representation of female fashion in the fresco was a significant forerunner of the tendencies that developed in Venice. But by the end of the fourteenth century a new style began to spread, where the representations of donors and other lay-characters in pictorial programmes were done with more tightfitting forms, akin to that found in the tomb in Mystras and in the fresco of the woman with the red dress in the Hodegetria. For example, in the Lamentation by Giotto (ca. 1365, held at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence but originally from the church of Saint Remigio) the kneeling woman in the centre is wearing a dress with this cut (Fig. 106).¹⁹⁵ Altichiero da Zevio, in the fresco scene of

¹⁹³ Pedrocchio, 138-40 cat. n. 2; Giovanna Nepi Sciré, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia* (Milano: Electa, 2009), esp. 33 cat. n. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Nepi Sciré, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia*, esp. 38-9 cat. n. 15.

¹⁹⁵ Luciano Bellosi, 'Giotto e la pittura di filiazione giottesca intorno alla metà del Trecento', *Prospettiva* CI (2001): 19-40, esp. 21; Angelo Tartuferi, ed., *L'eredità di Giotto: arte a Firenze, 1340-1375* (Firenze: Giunti, 2008), cat. n. 38.

Saint George baptizing Servius, king of Cyrene, on the northeast wall of the Oratorio di San Giorgio in Padua (1378-1384) depicted kneeling and standing women in the background, again wearing form-fitting dresses with a low-cut neck (Fig. 107).

Another relevant example of this evolution is found in the frescoes depicting the legend of Saint Ursula, in the chapel of Saint Ursula in the church of Saint Margherita in Treviso, dating to 1356-58 by Tomaso da Modena.¹⁹⁶ In the scene of the leave-taking of Saint Ursula from the mother (Fig. 108),¹⁹⁷ a group of women is represented with different types of female dresses. The Saint is presented with tight-fitting dress in the scene of her Triumph, where she is prayed to by the donors of the frescoed cycle.¹⁹⁸ In the Venetian context this was one of the first instances of representation of a form fitting dress flaring out just below the breasts. The costumes were possibly related to the visit of the Empress Anna of Swidnica in Treviso in 1354, giving an historical event as the source of the response of the artist.¹⁹⁹

This type of depiction was probably linked to the particular training Tomaso had received as an artist. Tomaso da Modena was trained in Bologna, probably in the workshop of Vitale da Bologna, which exposed him to techniques of Bolognese illumination.²⁰⁰ Vitale da Bologna, at the bottom of his *Madonna dei Denti*, painted for the church of Saint Maria or the Oratorio of Sant'Apollonia in Mezzaratta near Bologna (1345) and held at the Museo Davia Bargellini, shows small figures of donors (Fig. 109). The female on the left-hand side is wearing a dress that reveals

¹⁹⁶ On the church of St Margherita and the cycle of St Ursula in Treviso, see Robert Gibbs, *Tomaso Da Modena: Painting in Emilia and the March of Treviso, 1340-80* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 110-55.

¹⁹⁷ Gibbs, 140-41, pl. 70.

¹⁹⁸ Gibbs, 150-51, pl. 81.

¹⁹⁹ Gibbs, 127-32.

²⁰⁰ Gibbs, esp 29-31.

some shape, with a low-cut neck. Vitale was influenced by the Bolognese illuminators, who used a distinctive palette of colours: lime-green and vermillion, colours that Vitale uses to represent the donors.²⁰¹

We also have examples in the court of the Malatesti, which brings us close to the court of origin of Cleophe Malatesti: for example, the illumination by Michelino da Besozzo, of the workshop of Pietro da Pavia dating to 1390-1392 (Fig. 110). The illumination was probably produced in Pavia, and belongs to an illuminated manuscript of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* by Boetius and held in the Biblioteca Malatestiana in Cesena (ms D.XIV.1).²⁰² The illumination, which opens the entire manuscript, shows Boetius ill in bed, assisted by the muses and receiving the philosophy (ms D.XIV.1 c.1r). The muses are dressed according to the contemporary fashion, wearing dresses that emphasise their form in green, red and pink.²⁰³ The work must have arrived prior to the second half of the fifteenth century, as the illumination is then copied in 1451 by one of the illuminators active for Malatesta Novello.²⁰⁴

This type of representation became so broadly accepted in the Adriatic context by the first half of the fifteenth century, that it can be seen in several paintings. For example, the Marriage of Saint Monica, by Antonio Vivarini (1441) at Gallerie dell'Accademia (Fig. 111), shows the Saint in laywoman's clothes, as pointed out in

²⁰¹ Alessandro Volpe, *Mezzaratta: Vitale e altri pittori per una confraternita bolognese* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2005), esp. 48-52 and 50 fig. 33.

²⁰² On the manuscript see, Fabrizio Lollini, 'Michelino da Besozzo e bottega di Pietro da Pavia', in *Fioritura tardogotica nelle Marche*, ed. Paolo Dal Poggetto (Milano: Electa, 1998), 101-2.

²⁰³ Luciano Bellosi, ed., *Le arti figurative nelle corti dei Malatesti* (Rimini: Bruno Ghigi Editore, 2002), esp. 203-4.

²⁰⁴ Fabrizio Lollini, 'La decorazione libraria per i Malatesta nel XV secolo: un panorama generale', in *Il potere, le arti, la guerra. Lo splendore dei Malatesta*, ed. Angela Donati (Fondazione Cassa di risparmio di Rimini, 2001), 49-61; Bellosi, *Le arti figurative nelle corti dei Malatesti*, esp. 204.

the inscription 'This is how the Saint Monica was sent to her husband by her father and mother', paying particular attention to a rendering that reflected contemporary costume.²⁰⁵ And we can see that the shapely dress is far more revealing.

In a broader Italian context, we can also see Paolo Uccello's *Birth of the Virgin* (1435) in the Duomo of Prato, which gives a particularly evident representation of the way in which contemporary dress could be depicted (Fig. 112).²⁰⁶ Note the costume of the female figure descending the stairs on the left of the fresco, whose dress is at this point extremely form fitting and gendered, similar to the cut of the depiction in Mystras, as well as the reconstructed dress from the textile fragments.

A rare example, once at the Biblioteca Malatestiana in Pesaro, is the manuscript Manchester John Rylands Library, *Lat. MS 30*, which is the Nicholas of Lyra's Commentary on the bible. The Franciscan friar Ugolino di Marino Gibertuzzi di Sarnano compiled the manuscript in the Franciscan convent in Pesaro in 1402. The manuscript was commissioned by Malatesta Malatesti, also known as Malatesta dei Sonetti, father of Cleophe Malatesti.²⁰⁷ The manuscript was then sent to the court of the Gonzaga in Mantua following the wedding of Paola Malatesti, daughter of Malatesta dei Sonetti and sister to Cleophe, with Gianfrancesco Gonzaga. In the folio 167v of manuscript *Lat. MS 30* we find the genealogic table of the Diadochi from Alexander the Great to Antiochus Epiphanes and Ptolemy Philometor (Fig. 113). The

²⁰⁵ Nepi Sciré, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia*, 42 cat. n. 23.

²⁰⁶ Alessandro Angelini, 'Paolo Uccello, il beato Jacopone da Todi e la datazione degli affreschi di Prato', *Prospettiva*, no. 61 (1991): 49–53; Matteo Mazzalupi, 'Un caso di metodo: gli affreschi di Prato e la giovinezza di Paolo Uccello', in *Da Donatello a Lippi: officina pratese*, ed. Andrea De Marchi and Cristina Gnoni Mavarelli (Milano: Skira, 2013), 65–75.

²⁰⁷ Montague R. James, ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Latin Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library at Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921), 81–7; Simonetta Nicolini, 'Alcune note su codici riminesi e malatestiani', *Studi Romagnoli* 39 (1988): 17–39, esp. 18.

table is illustrated with busts of kings and of three queens: Berenice, second wife of Anthiocus II Theos, Laodicea, first wife of Anthiocus II Theos, and Cleopatra, daughter of Anthiocus III the great. The female busts show these women dressed in form fitting dresses with low cut neck, with Berenice and Laodicea also showing the tightening just below the breasts and the flaring of the dress below, suggesting once again the style of the time. Finally, for the death of the mother of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Margherita Malatesti (d. 1399) a tomb effigy is sculpted by Pier Paolo delle Masegne (d. 1403) (

Fig. 114). The tomb is currently kept in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantova.²⁰⁸ The funerary effigy is shown wearing a *giornea*, under which she is wearing a form fitting dress with a texture that resembles damask. All of these examples show that in the Italian courts linked to one of the three Latin *basilissai*, fashion is already captured in the pictorial programmes, frescoes, sculpture and in the illuminated production.

The other important evidence emerging from the archaeological dig in Mystras is the lozenges pattern found on the chemise (Fig. 88A, Fig. 89A-B). A similar pattern is pictorially rendered in a fresco in the church of Hagioi Theodoroi, further evidence of the dialogue between contemporary real fashion items and their representation.

The northeast arm of the cross-in-square church hosts an articulated composition that was originally painted on the vault and the upper portion of the walls dividing the *naos* from the northeast and northwest chapels (Table 42 Fig. 86). The composition has been interpreted in the secondary literature as a depiction of the Descent of the

²⁰⁸ Jane Martineau and David Chambers, eds., *Splendours of the Gonzaga: Exhibition, 4 November 1981-31 January 1982, Victoria & Albert Museum, London* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1981), 3 and 5 pl. 10.

Holy Ghost, the Pentecost.²⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the fresco is now severely damaged – it survives in small patches, making distinguishing the composition in its entirety difficult – so a proper iconographical analysis is impossible.

On the east upper wall however, it is possible to distinguish two main figures, both seated on thrones, with haloes and holding red scrolls, flanking a group of people (Fig. 115). Similarly, in his reconstructive drawing of the opposite fresco, Millet highlighted a group of people, on the west wall, flanked by two figures on two thrones and with haloes.²¹⁰ What is strikingly clear on the east portion of this fresco, however, is that the composition gives a substantial predominance to the central figure standing at the centre of the fresco, surrounded by a group of other figures who cannot be identified. The central figure is standing in front of a figure with a red dress, and is wearing a white tunic. On the right, behind the latter, it is possible to see the outline of another figure wearing a full-length tunic. The figure wearing the red dress is wearing a full-length red tunic with long sleeves, tight around the elbow and open towards the cuffs. Her left arm appears on the right of the central figure, as if she were wrapping her arm around her left side (Fig. 116, Fig. 117).

The front central figure is wearing a full-length white tunic with a round collar. A *loros* adorns the central frontal part of the tunic, decorated with red embroidery,

²⁰⁹ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pl. 1 Schéma 1a n. 11 and Schéma 1b n. 19. Dufrenne seems to be certain about the portion of the scene on the west upper wall. The scene on the eastern upper wall is not surely identified. Gabriel Millet also identifies the fresco as depicting the Descent of the Holy Ghost but he provides the reconstructive drawing only of the west wall, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 89 n. 3.

²¹⁰ Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 89 n. 3. Dufrenne erroneously attributed a photograph of this fresco to the eastern portion of the programme, see Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, fig. 7. This illustration in Dufrenne's book has the correct caption but it is misplaced in the diagram at schéma 1a n. 11. Fig. 7 refers to schema 1b n. 19

running from the collar all the way down to the bottom of the skirt (Fig. 116).²¹¹ The figure on the left, in the red dress, is helping the central figure to wear the back tail of the *loros* (Fig. 117), which comes from behind and crosses the front of the figure at waist level. The rendering of the *loros* is unfortunately damaged, so it is difficult to infer its exact design and decoration. But it is still possible to see the trace of a faded decorative pattern, one that appears – even if less clearly – on the decoration of the white tunic worn by the figure on the right back side.

The rendered embroidery of the *loros* shows a pattern suggesting that the garment was made of fine silk, decorated with a decorative motif running along the length of the tunic, and reappearing on the semi-horizontal train of the *loros* that comes from behind, held by the left back figure with her left arm (Fig. 117). This arm appears from the back, on the left side of the central figure, and covered with the same red fabric of the tunic worn by the back figure, also wearing red shoes, on the left of the central one.

The decoration of the *loros* consists of a repetitive pattern of lozenges, diamond shaped elements, organized diagonally in relation to the length of the *loros*, and enclosed by a grid of lines, which follow the same diagonal alignment of the diamonds (Fig. 118). Each of the sides of the small diamonds are divided by small indentations that make the diamonds resemble a metal frame, akin to those usually used for precious stone mountings. The attention to this rendition suggests the painter's intention to give a faithful rendition of a precious fabric, reminiscent of the decorative pattern of the chemise found in the tomb near Hagia Sophia.

²¹¹ On the *loros*, see Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Glossary, 346.

While materials articulating a specific female identity reflecting the broader international context are limited in Mystras, the few elements we have been able to examine – from the garment found in the tomb near Hagia Sophia, to the funerary portrait in the Hodegetria, to the earlier analysis of the centrality of the woman's portrait in the Peribleptos and the use of emblems to index political agency – in aggregate represent a political and historical agency of the Latin *basilissai*, linking their courts of origin and their Western context, to the community of Mystras between the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century.

That the Latin *basilissai* had an impact in Mystras that reflected an agency representative of a broader historical, economic and cultural context, rather than just a specific gendered one, can be further supported by examining corresponding case studies of male fashion, which corroborate the interpretation of fashion as an index of a broader agency and as a cultural phenomenon that involves both women and men in Mystras, showing us just how connected Mystras was to the rest of the Mediterranean.

II.5 Italian textiles and fashion in male portraits in Mystras

In the first part of this chapter we have seen how the Latin *basilissai* were able, within the framework of the court, to exercise visible acts of patronage. The fact that the despots allowed these affirmative acts to occur was an implicit recognition of the value of the dynastic and political links these women represented. This is particularly evident in the case of Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de Lusignan, as already recognized in the literature. We have then seen that, as we expand our considerations

to expressions of patronage of members of the elites more generally, we can recognize the signature of Western style textiles and dresses in female portraits, that reflect the fashion associated with Latin women from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards. We now turn to considering how the same signs can also be found in depictions of male fashion, a further indication of the significant power and influence that the presence of the Latin *basilissai* had on the customs of the court.

Imitation of fashion is something we have encountered previously in this chapter in the context of female depictions in Crete. Crete was a Venetian dominion with a Greek-Orthodox community. In the desire to imitate rulers, it is not surprising that Latin fashion appears in representations. We saw this in female representations in the previous section, but this is also true of male fashion. For example, Stancioiu points out an example of a slit sleeve similar to Western representations in the fifteenth-century fresco of George Chortatzis and his wife in the chapel of Hagia Paraskeve in Amari, Crete (Fig. 119). The representation of his garment is uncommon in Byzantine fashion and, according to Stancioiu, indicative of a Western style.²¹²

But in the case of Mystras, unlike Crete, the rulers were meant to follow to a highly codified set of standards. The Byzantine court was highly codified, so much so that when they went to Italy for official visits they were recognizable precisely for their dress, as we saw earlier in the case of Pisanello.²¹³ Yet, in Hagioi Theodoroi, Mystras we have examples of individuals in funerary monuments portrayed with Western details.

²¹² Stancioiu, 'Objects and Identity: An Analysis of Some Material Remains of the Latin and Orthodox Residents of Late Medieval Rhodes, Cyprus, and Crete', esp. 184.

²¹³ See above page 84.

There are several burials in church of Hagioi Theodoroi (Table 37 – Table 42). Most of them are located on the exterior, but two individual ones, clearly more important, are inside the southeast and northeast chapels (Fig. 120, Fig. 121). These two funerary monuments were not burials for monks, given the depiction of laymen, yet they are the two most important in this church because of their prominent location, large size and decoration.²¹⁴

These burials were for individuals who were likely either very close to the imperial family or members themselves, and yet we see details that speak of Western influence. These details suggest the imitation of an exogenous Latin fashion, though not the official standard of the ruling class, and must therefore be associated, at the Mystras court, with the Italian *basilissai*. This is an index that these visual details were culturally salient, even though the frescoes are integrated in a very traditional Byzantine funerary monument, in an important monastery, where the monastic community – the primary audience for the frescoes alongside the family – were members of the elite.

We also corroborate this thesis with a historical document in which Sphrantzes is keen to point out the Italian provenance of a garment given to him by Despot Constantine Palaiologos, so as to indicate its value. Similarly, the representation of the male garments in these frescoes are indications of materials of Spanish or Italian provenance and signal a prestigious origin.

²¹⁴ Burials within a monastery of prominent individuals were not unusual. The case of the Chora monastery is discussed by Sharon Gerstel in Sharon Gerstel, ‘The Chora Parekklesion, the Hope for a Peaceful Afterlife, and Monastic Devotional Practices’, in *Kariye Camii, Yeniden. The Kariye Camii Reconsidered*, ed. Holger A. Klein, Robert Ousterhout, and Brigitte Pitarakis (Istanbul: Istanbul Research Institute Publications, 2011), 107–45, esp. 140.

II.5.a Male funerary portrait in Hagioi Theodoroi Southeast chapel

The function of the south funerary chapel in Hagioi Theodoroi is marked by the fresco of the Koímesis or Dormition just above the entrance to the chapel (Fig. 120, Fig. 122, Fig. 123, Table 39). The chapel is fully equipped for liturgical needs, featuring a small apse with a representation of the icon of the Zoodochos Pege, an altar, and an abbreviated fresco cycle with the *lives* of the Theotokos and Christ.

Of particular interest is the attire of the unidentified male figure depicted inside the chapel (Fig. 124A-C - Fig. 127A-C, Table 39 – Table 40). The most convincing efforts to identify this man was made by Maria Parani, who suggested he might be a despot, although no evidence exists to determine his identity.²¹⁵ Parani based her conclusion on Rodoniki Etzeoglou's reading of the man's attire as a Byzantine costume.²¹⁶ I, however, propose a different interpretation for the reading of the man's costume.

The male figure is portrayed standing in the lower register of the north wall of the chapel. Behind the man, an angelic figure – likely the archangel Michael – is carrying a lance in the right hand while the left holds a globe (Fig. 124A). Inside the globe the letter X of the XΔK (Χρίστος Δίκαιος Κριτῆς = Christ the Just Judge) is barely visible. The globe is suspended above the male figure, suggesting he is awaiting the last judgement, while seemingly asking for the intercession of another standing figure in front of him, identifiable from the details of the fur of his tunic as John the Baptist (Fig. 126).²¹⁷ The commemorative and supplicant associations of

²¹⁵ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 338 n. 64.

²¹⁶ Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra'.

²¹⁷ For a reconstruction of this fresco, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 90 fig. 1.

this iconographic arrangement are coherent with the overall decorative programme on the walls and vaults of the chapel.

The man wears high-quality attire, garments and accessories (Fig. 124A-B, Fig. 127A-B, Table 39). The attire is composed of a lower tunic and an outer garment (Table 11). The lower tunic is red, barely visible as it covers the right forearm from the middle of the biceps to the wrist. On top of this tunic is a second garment, with a sophisticated design, and elaborately arranged (Table 12). This over-tunic has long, ample sleeves that appear to be cut with a long slit along the length of the arm up to the lower front part of the shoulder.

The right arm sleeve, the only one fully visible, is only partially extended since the man has his arm inserted into the slit (Table 12). The sleeve is dark red, while the slit is decorated with a white embroidered rim, visible where the sleeve opens at the top of the right bicep and as it hangs on the right side of the man's torso. This over-tunic covers the torso and the whole front of the body, tightened around the waist by a belt, now white in colour, from which a white handkerchief is hanging according to Palaiologan fashion (Table 12).²¹⁸

The over-tunic is decorated with a complex pattern of arabesque motifs, either embroidered in yellow or gold over the dark red background, or realized as a bi-coloured damask (Fig. 124B, Fig. 125, Fig. 127A-B). Particular attention has also been given to the decorative pattern of the damasked fabric (Table 11, Table 12, Table 40). The way in which the pattern – made of heart shapes or small leaves –

²¹⁸ On the different costumes of officers and dignitaries of the imperial court, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 35-68. For a detailed survey of late Byzantine male fashion, see Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 58-72.

covers the surface of the tunic conveys a sense of three-dimensionality, as different elements are represented with varying dimensions, giving the depicted textile a physical appearance.

The man wears a yellow conical hat (Fig. 125). The upper part of the hat shows elements that are similar to an imperial *stephanos*, in which one can usually recognize a sequence of small arches positioned on top of a decorated band. His right hand is holding an object that, while faded, resembles a shaft. His left hand, held in front, is clutching something hard to identify (Fig. 127A-B). The facial features have been scraped, but small details on the side of the face reveal a beard (Fig. 125).

The elaborate funerary setting, the iconography of the fresco, and the attention to the costume details suggest that this anonymous man must have been an important figure at the court of Mystras, someone close to the ruling families of the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi or even one of its members. It is otherwise difficult to explain the privilege he was granted of a fully decorated chapel, directly accessible from the main *naos*, in such an important monastic foundation.

While describing this figure, Maria Parani argues that he is probably a despot, dating his portrait to the fifteenth century.²¹⁹ But if he were a despot, why is he not wearing the attire usually employed to depict such a figure in Byzantium? In the late period, the iconography used to depict a despot had become standardized, at least from the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos, when the title became a prerogative of members of the imperial family. An earlier example of this standardization is the depiction on

²¹⁹ Cfr. Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 59-60 and 339 n. 65. Parani 2003, p.338 – Appendix 3 no. 65, and also pp. 59–60

a seal of Despot Constantine Doukas Komnenos Palaiologos (1277 c. - 1329), son of Andronikos II (Fig. 128).²²⁰ In a later version, this costume appears in the poorly preserved funerary portrait of Despot Theodore I Palaiologos, shown in his burial monument in the Hodegetria (Fig. 129). The version of the costume of the despot, at least the one used in public and official appearances, is described by the *Treatise* by Pseudo-Kodinos in the section ‘Concerning the attire of each of the dignities and offices’.²²¹ Here the Pseudo-Kodinos writes that the despot wears ‘red garment [ῥοῦχον] [...] just like the imperial one, with *rhizai*, but without the *stratelatikia*. His cloak [ταμπάριον] is red with borders. The stockings are red. His shoes are two-coloured, violet and white, with eagles made of pearls on the sides and also on the instep, that is, on the upper leather of the shoes. [...] On feast days he wears a gold *skaranikon* [σκαράνικον], decorated with precious stones and pearls, the so-called *perichyta* [περίχυτα]. His caftan [καββάδιον] decorated with pearls, is violet or red, whichever of these desires and approves’.²²²

The ῥοῦχον, *rouchon*, is believed to be an under garment, a tunic, worn by the despot, the *sebastokrator*, the caesar and the emperor.²²³ *Rhizai* are embroidered edges of the garment. The cloak is the outer garment worn only by the despot, the *sebastokrator*, the caesar and few other dignitaries and in the Pseudo-Kodinos it seems to be used to indicate the *chlamys*.²²⁴ The *chlamys* is a full-length mantle secured to the right shoulder or at the front, worn, in the late period, by the highest

²²⁰ G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 3 (Basel, 1972), vol I, pt. 3, 1584–6, pl. 190, nn. 2758 a–b.

²²¹ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 35–69.

²²² Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, 35–43.

²²³ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, 37 n. 18.

²²⁴ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 64; Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 37 n. 20.

imperial dignitaries.²²⁵ The caftan, the *kabbadion*, is also something only worn by the despot and high officials.²²⁶ It was a full-length coat, tight around the neck, closed on the front sometimes by silver or metal buttons, featuring long sleeves with embroidered bands. It was tightened around the waist by a belt with a metal buckle, to which a knitted handkerchief was usually attached. Most of the time, the caftan was made of precious materials such as silk damask or other rich embroidered fabrics, typically depicting floral, geometric or zoomorphic motifs and sometimes monograms.

In the portrait of Theodore I Palaiologos (Fig. 129), the despot wears a version of the costume very similar to the one described in the *Treatise* by Pseudo-Kodinos.

Though barely visible, the costume of Theodore I comprises a lower garment, which is visible on the right elbow and a caftan with sleeves cut at the height of the bicep.

Also, according to the editors of the recent edition of the Pseudo-Kodinos, Theodore I is wearing on his head the *skaranikon* a cylindrical hat, made of gold, decorated with pearls and precious stones, the *perichyta*, and with a domed top.²²⁷

Based on the visual analysis above, the funerary portrait in the southeast chapel of the Hagioi Theodoroi shows subtle variations from the traditional depiction of the costume. For example, in it there are notable variations of the so-called caftan-like

²²⁵ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 344.

²²⁶ The *kabbadion* became fashionable in the late period as reported by pseudo-Kodinos: 'Among the officeholders who wore the kabbadion were the despotes, the *megas doux*, the *megas logothetes*, and the *megas myrtaïtes* (pseudo-Kod. 146.2, 153.18, 154.16–17, 166.13–14)', in Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Kabbadion." In Kazhdan 1991, Vol. II and in <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-2700>.

²²⁷ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 41 n. 35.

garment that came into use for aristocrats and officials after the twelfth century (Fig. 124A-B).²²⁸

An early depiction of the standard representation is the caftan worn by John Lemniotes, son of the donor Theodore Lemniotes, in his late twelfth-century depiction in the church of Hagioi Anargyroi in Kastoria (Fig. 130).²²⁹ Later versions during the Palaiologan period can be seen in the depictions of the *protosebastor* Constantine Raoul Palaiologos in the Lincoln College Typikon at fol. 6r of the fourteenth century (Fig. 90), or the *megas doux* Alexios Apokaukos in *Par. Gr. 2144* (Fig. 16).²³⁰ The latter two are shown worn on their own, even though they could have been worn on top of a tunic. This iconography can also be found in the depiction of Kaniotes, the *skouterios* depicted in the south portico of the Hodegetria (Fig. 14, Fig. 15C), discussed above, and a very similar rendition can be seen in the portrait of Constantine Akropolites on the silver icon-revetment of an icon of the Hodegetria dating to the end of thirteenth or beginning of fourteenth century, now in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow (Fig. 91).²³¹

But the outer garment worn by our unidentified man shows variations from these iconographic standards (Fig. 124A-B, Table 11). Etzeoglou provides a different analysis than the one I propose. She believes this caftan is unbuttoned on the front,

²²⁸ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 339–40.

²²⁹ Stylianos M. Pelekanidēs, *Kastoria* (Athens, Greece: Melissa, 1985), 43 fig. 23; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, pl. 66.

²³⁰ The portrait of Constantine Raoul Palaiologos is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lincoln College, gr. 35, fol. 6r (Lincoln College Typikon) (1327-1342). The costume is discussed in Velmans, 'Le portrait dans l'art des Paléologues', 125-6, fig. 47 and pl. LVII; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 58-9, fig. 67; Leslie Brubaker, 'Show and Tell', in *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through Its Art*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 247–60, esp. 256-60. On the Lincoln College Typikon, see Hutter, 'Die Geschichte des Lincoln College Typikons'. The portrait of Alexios Apokaukos is in *Par. gr. 2144*, fol. 2r, Bibliothèque nationale de France (after 1334). It is discussed in Velmans, 'Le portrait dans l'art des Paléologues', 125-6, figs. 43, 44 and pl. LV; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 58-9, fig. 68.

²³¹ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 74-5.

with short sleeves cut at the height of the armpits, left loose in the back, and probably inserted in the belt on the back.²³² Etzeoglou interprets these details as evidence of a different kind of costume, a *lapatzas*, a garment worn by generic Byzantine dignitaries.²³³ An example of this can be seen in Tomb G in the outer narthex of the *katholikon* of the Chora Monastery, dating to the mid fifteenth century, where we see the lower part of a male figure (the upper part of the fresco is damaged) wearing a dark grey garment decorated with black motifs, dark grey mantle, and very long sleeves hanging along the sides (Fig. 131).²³⁴ Examples of this kind of garment can also be seen in Western art. For example, the first man on the left of the group on the right of the Flagellation by Piero della Francesca wears a *lapatzas* (Fig. 132). Pisanello also drew the *lapatzas* when he was sketching members of the Byzantine delegation at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (Fig. 43, Fig. 44A-B).²³⁵

While I agree that the costume shows a non-conventional caftan, close visual examination reveals a different interpretation of the whole costume (Fig. 124B, Table 11, Table 12). The two main components of the costume, the reddish lower tunic, barely visible, can be the *ῥοῦχον*, *rouchon*, but the top garment is neither a *chlamys*, a caftan, nor a *lapatzas*. This over-tunic is a different garment from those

²³² Cfr. Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra', 513–21.

²³³ "lapatzas: a garment worn by certain Byzantine dignitaries in the Palaiologan period. It was worn girt and was furnished with exceedingly long sleeves which were tucked in the belt at the back. The *megas domestikos* had the right to leave one sleeve hanging down freely, as a sign of honour (cf. *granatza*)", in Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Glossary, 346.

²³⁴ Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, esp. 292-5.

²³⁵ Antonio Pisano, *Sketches of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus, a Monk, and a Scabbard*, 1438, Pen and brown ink on ivory laid paper 189 x 265 mm (max.). The drawing is the Margaret Day Blake Collection, 1961.331R, The Art Institute Chicago. On this drawing, see Suzanne Folds McCullagh and Laura Giles, eds., *Italian Drawings before 1600 in the Art Institute of Chicago: A Catalogue of the Collection* (Chicago, Ill: The Institute, 1997), 192. On the Pisanello's drawings in general, see Maria Fossi Todorow, *I disegni del Pisanello e della sua cerchia* (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 1966); Elena Filippi, 'Les Dessins', in *Pisanello* (Paris: Hazan, 1996), 195–224; Syson, *Pisanello*. On Pisanello and the Byzantine delegation at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, see Silvia Ronchey, 'Piero, Pisanello e i bizantini al concilio di Ferrara-Firenze', in *Piero della Francesca e le corti italiane* (Milano: Skira, 2007), 13–19.

analysed above and from the caftan worn by Theodore Metochites in the *parekklesion* of the Chora *katholikon* (Fig. 133), as it does not show visible buttons on the front, and seems to close in front just by the overlapping of lapels over the chest (Fig. 124B, Table 11).

The yellow conical hat (Fig. 125) worn by our figure is also quite different from a despotic *stephanos*, such as the one worn by Theodore I Palaiologos (Fig. 129). The fresco rendition of the headpiece shares some of the general structural features of the eleventh-century Hungarian Crown, such as the horizontal band topped by small arches.²³⁶ However, the decorations of the hat, in red over a yellow or gold background, and the ones of the tunic, in yellow or gold over a red background, are specular, denoting a careful arrangement of the overall costume, comprising also the headpiece. Usually laymen of social relevance are depicted wearing strictly defined headwear, based on iconographic standards also defined by Pseudo-Kodinos.²³⁷

The outer garment worn by the male figure in the southeast chapel of Hagioi Theodoroi also reflects a fascination for Eastern caftans, which were, according to Parani, part of the Byzantine fashion of the late period.²³⁸ An early example of a ninth-century silk caftan from Moshchevaja Balka (Fig. 134, Fig. 135),²³⁹ in the north of the Caucasian mountains, shows a *senmvur* pattern in gold and blue that is still

²³⁶ See in general Éva Kovács, *The Hungarian Crown and Other Regalia* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1980); Cecily J. Hilsdale, 'The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-Invented', *Art History* 31, no. 5 (2008): 602–631.

²³⁷ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 43–68.

²³⁸ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 58–72.

²³⁹ The caftan is now at State Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, inv. No. Kz6584, see Elfriede R. Knauer, 'A Man's Caftan and Leggings from the North Caucasus of the Eighth to Tenth Century: A Genealogical Study', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 36 (2001): 125–54, 127 and 129 fig. 5.

referenced by the decoration of the fabric used for the caftan that Doux Alexios Apokaukos is wearing in his portrait at f. Iir in the *Par. Gr. 2144* (Fig. 16).²⁴⁰

However, I would like to argue that our costume also shows Western influences, as its outer-tunic takes into account also Western understanding of Eastern caftans. If we accept the fifteenth-century periodization proposed by Parani,²⁴¹ the garment is especially close to garments represented in fifteenth-century depictions of courtesans in Italy, such as the so-called Balthazar in the Benozzo Gozzoli *Magi* fresco in the Medici chapel in Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence (1459-62) (Fig. 136),²⁴² or the far right noble man depicted in the *Flagellation* by Piero della Francesca (ca. 1455) (Fig. 132),²⁴³ or the over garment worn by the gentleman on the left in the *Courtiers in a Rose Garden* tapestry (ca. 1440-50), now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Fig. 137).²⁴⁴ When the unknown man is represented with this garment,

²⁴⁰ See above footnote page 133.n. 230

²⁴¹ Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 338, Appendix 3 n. 65.

²⁴² For the association of John VIII Palaiologos with the so-called Balthazar figure in the Benozzo Gozzoli *Magi* fresco in the Medici chapel in Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence, see Cristina Acidini Luchinat, ed., *The Chapel of the Magi: Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi Florence* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 'The South Wall', 119-64. See in general Franco Cardini, *La Cavalcata d'Oriente: I Magi di Benozzo a Palazzo Medici*, 1. ed (Roma: Tomo edizioni, 1991); Franco Cardini, *The Chapel of the Magi in Palazzo Medici* (Firenze: Mandragora, 2001).

²⁴³ The iconography and historical implications of the *Flagellation* by Piero della Francesca has generated a significant scholarship, which includes Creighton Gilbert, 'Piero Della Francesca's Flagellation: The Figures in the Foreground', *The Art Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (1971): 41-51; Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *Piero Della Francesca: The Flagellation*, Art in Context (New York: Viking Press, 1972); Thalia Gouma-Peterson, 'Piero Della Francesca's Flagellation: An Historical Interpretation', *Storia Dell'Arte* 28 (1976): 217-33; Carlo Ginzburg, *The Enigma of Piero: Piero Della Francesca: The Baptism, The Arezzo Cycle, The Flagellation* (London: Verso, 1985); John Pope-Hennessy, 'Whose Flagellation?', *Apollo* 124, no. 295 (1986): 162-65; Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *Piero Della Francesca: The Flagellation*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Ronchey, *L'enigma di Piero*.

²⁴⁴ On the *Courtiers in a Rose Garden* tapestry, wool warp; wool, silk, metallic weft yarns (288.9 x 325.1 cm), Rogers Fund, 1909, Accession Number: 09.137.2 (ca. 1440-50), Metropolitan Museum New York, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 174-189 n. 8; Elisabeth Antoine, *Sur la terre comme au ciel: jardins d'occident à la fin du Moyen-âge: Paris, Musée national du Moyen-âge, Thermes de Cluny, 6 juin-16 septembre 2002* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002), 106-7 n. 30; Thomas P. Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty: Tapestries at the Tudor Court* (New Haven:

seemingly brocaded with gold thread, he is being represented with a garment of Italian production, as recognized by Jacoby, in his considerations on the undergarment of the Chora man in Tomb F, believed to be of Italian manufacture (Fig. 19). He recognizes it as 'Italian velvet cloth of gold'.²⁴⁵

The design of the over tunic worn by the unidentified male figure refers to a broader context of appreciation of Eastern looking garments, one in which different elements are interpreted and combined to create new dress codes expressing wealth and prestige, both in Byzantium and the West, and also reflects fifteenth-century depictions, recurrent in the West but not in Byzantium, of noble men wearing embroidered and damask caftans, accessorised with long sleeves with slits running along the length of the arm.

To conclude, while it is not possible to establish a direct historical connection between the fresco details of the southeast funerary chapel of the Hagioi Theodoroi and the Western examples discussed above, the unique visual solutions adopted for the garments should be read in the context of the specific commercial and cultural exchanges between exogenous powers and the ruling class active in Morea and the city of Mystras.

I agree with Parani that the unidentified man might be a despot. In the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, despots of Mystras were Manuel Kantakouzenos, Theodore I and Theodore II Palaiologos. Because a funerary portrait of Theodore I is in the Hodegetria (Fig. 129), we are left with two possible options for Hagioi Theodoroi:

Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2007), 33-4 fig. 2.14.

²⁴⁵ Jacoby, 'Late Byzantium between the Mediterranean and Asia: Trade and Material Culture', 29.

Manuel Kantakouzenos and Theodore II. While it is not possible to establish which of the two this man was, both despots were heavily exposed to Western standards through their wives.

This, I would argue, is the reason why the funerary portrait in Hagioi Theodoroi shares the same interest in specific valuable garments and sophisticated textiles that compelled the Italian artist Paolo Schiavo in the late twenties, or early thirties, of the fifteenth century to depict one of the Magi of his Adoration of the Magi, in a *predella* panel now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as dressed in a costume similar to that of our unidentified despot, who shared with members of European courts a similar cultural heritage (Fig. 138).²⁴⁶ I believe this heritage, during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, both in the East and in the West, was undergoing a process of renewal and redefinition of its visual and artistic attributes of which this funerary monument is an index.

II.5.b Manuel Palaiologos' funerary portrait in Hagioi Theodoroi Northeast chapel

In the north chapel of the church of the Hagioi Theodoroi is located another funerary monument (Fig. 121, Fig. 139 – Fig. 140A-B, Table 40 – Table 42). The only surviving fresco inside the chapel is of a kneeling man in front of a standing Theotokos and child. An inscription painted just above the head of the kneeling

²⁴⁶ See Paolo Schiavo, *Adoration of the Magi*, predella panel, tempera on tooled gold on panel with horizontal grain, 22.5x32.2x1.2 cm, John G. Johnson Collection, cat. 126, Philadelphia Museum of Art. On the predella panel with the Adoration of the Magi by Paolo Schiavo, see Carl Brandon Strehlke, ed., *Italian Paintings, 1250-1450: In the John G. Johnson Collection and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, in association with the Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 385-6 and 385 pl. 75C.

figure identifies the man as Manuel Palaiologos (Table 41, Table 42 Fig. 85B1).²⁴⁷ It also bears another inscription, which was added at a second stage in minuscule letters. This inscription shows the date of the death of this Manuel, October second indiction 6932, or 1423, a date Suzy Dufrenne corrects to 1425 and Maria Parani to 1453 (Table 42 Fig. 85B1).²⁴⁸

The face of the portrayed man and the central portion of the inscription have been erased and it is not possible to identify exactly the man's historical identity (Fig. 139). He was clearly identified as a member of the Palaiologan family in Mystras, and buried here because of his high-ranking status. There were only three known members of the Palaiologan family who could be granted such privileges and who bore the name Manuel, between the years of the Byzantine re-conquest of the Morea and the final surrender to the Ottomans: the first was Manuel Palaiologos (n.d.) son of Michael IX (1294/5-1320); the second Manuel (n.d.) was an illegitimate son of John V Palaiologos; the third was the legitimate son Manuel of John V, then emperor as Manuel II Palaiologos.²⁴⁹

It is unlikely that this is the burial of Manuel II, since the costume worn by the man portrayed is not an imperial one. In addition, Manuel II died in Constantinople and was buried, according to Sphrantzes, in the Pantokrator monastery.²⁵⁰ As for the son

²⁴⁷ For the inscription, see Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 120–21. The first of the inscription reads: ὁ παρομιος μανου[ῆ]λ ὁ πα[λ]αιολόγος.

²⁴⁸ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, 5; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 339 and Appendix 3 n. 69.

²⁴⁹ On Manuel II Palaiologos, see above I.2.c - The Despotate and the Latin *Basilissai*, esp. 18. On the illegitimate son of John V Palaiologos, see Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, 285, 285 n. 153 and 407.

²⁵⁰ 'Today on the 21st of the month of July of the same year [1425], having become of glorious and saint memory in his happy end, the Emperor Lord Manuel died, who two days before because of divine and angelic dress have had his name changed in that of Matthew the monk, and he was buried

of Michael IX, he was appointed despot by his father and died, killed by his brother Andronikos, in 1329.²⁵¹ If we accept the date in the second inscription, the Manuel to whom the inscription refers to cannot be the son of Michael IX, also because the costume used to portray him does not show any of the features of the costume of a despot.²⁵²

There is not much information regarding the life of the illegitimate son of John V, the only Manuel left of the three, but considering the date of the death in the inscription – just a few months before the death of Manuel II Palaiologos – one could argue that the two might have been of a similar generation, suggesting that the Manuel Palaiologos portrayed in the church of Hagioi Theodoroi was the illegitimate son of John V, and half-brother to Manuel II Palaiologos.²⁵³ If we accept this hypothesis, the costume used to depict this Manuel becomes more understandable, and helps to reinforce part of the thesis of this chapter, namely the mixed and multicultural fashion environment that was present in Mystras during the Despotate.

The kneeling figure is wearing a lower tunic, an over garment, and head wear. The condition of the fresco is very poor, making it difficult to see the details of the composition. However, the few remaining are illuminating (Fig. 139, Fig. 140A-B). The depiction of the over-garment indicates that the figure is wearing a caftan that, in this case, does not fit the description of the *kabbadion* worn by male officials and members of the imperial court, as reported by Pseudo-Kodinos. He is wearing a blue caftan featuring short sleeves, not tight to the arms as in the *kabbadion*. The caftan

on the same glorious day in the venerable Pantokrator monastery, with lament and participation [...]. Whole of the days of his life were 77 years and 25 days', in Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, 30–31.

²⁵¹ Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*, (London: Hart-Davis, 1972), 161.

²⁵² See above pages 131-131 and page 131 n. 222.

²⁵³ Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, 285 n. 153.

does not show an exterior embroidered decoration, such as the one on the caftan worn by the unknown male figure in the south chapel of Hagioi Theodoroi (Fig. 124A-B). Instead, it features sleeves that are probably finished with fur.

If compared with earlier examples of caftan's rendition in late Byzantine frescoes, such as the one of the male figure in the funerary depiction on the west wall of south chapel of the church of the Hodegetria analysed above (Fig. 14, Fig. 15C), this iconographic solution is eccentric, and reminds us again of caftan renditions that can be found in a Western context. Once again, the example that comes to mind is the caftan worn by the so-called Balthazar figure in the Magi fresco in the Medici chapel in Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence by Benozzo Gozzoli (1459-60) (Fig. 136),²⁵⁴ very similar to the iconographic solution adopted by Gentile da Fabriano for the caftan worn by one of the Magi on his *The Adoration of the Magi* (1423) (Fig. 141A-B).²⁵⁵ The caftan depicted in Mystras, the ones portrayed by Benozzo Gozzoli and Gentile da Fabriano, all share a similar model, which has strong resemblance to the caftan found in Byzantine burials of earlier periods, such as the blue-green fur-lined silk caftan with a *senmurv* pattern from Moshchevaja Balka (Fig. 134), discussed earlier in this chapter.²⁵⁶

In reality, the caftans worn by Byzantine aristocrats associated with the imperial court followed a different convention, a point also seen in the previous section of this chapter. An example of a more conventional rendition, for instance, is given by the

²⁵⁴ For an introduction on the chapel, see Cristina Acidini Luchinat, ed., *The Chapel of the Magi: Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi Florence* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 7–16.

²⁵⁵ '[...] In 1419 Gentile set out for Rome with eight members of his household and eight horses, stopping on the way to paint *The Adoration of the Magi* in Florence in 1423' in Syson, *Pisanello*, 16.

²⁵⁶ See footnote n. 239, 135

figure of the patron Theodore Metochites kneeling in front of Christ while presenting a model of the Chora *katholikon* (Fig. 133), which was realized between 1315-21.

We also have Western direct testimonies of this fashion, in the drawings by Pisanello of the caftan worn by John VIII during his travels in Italy for the Ferrara-Florence council. Here he depicts the caftan with long sleeves worn by the male figure on a horse representing the court of Emperor John VIII Palaiologos during the Council of Ferrara and Florence (Fig. 43).²⁵⁷ The caftan worn by John VIII in the drawing by Pisanello, now at the Louvre, also shows an outer garment that does not feature short sleeves (Fig. 44A-B).²⁵⁸ Finally, Pisanello also depicts the same long sleeves on the portrait on horse on the obverse of the portrait medal of John VIII modelled in 1439 (Fig. 142, Fig. 143).²⁵⁹

The artist responsible for the portrayal of Manuel in the funerary chapel in Hagioi Theodoroi is adopting a convention that differs from Byzantine dressing standards for portraying a member of the imperial family. Under the caftan, the portrayed figure wears a long sleeve vest. Only the sleeves are visible. There are no details indicating the length of this vest: it could be a full-length garment or a shirt. The sleeves of this lower garment have a striped decoration and are closed around the man's forearms and wrists by four buttons (Fig. 139, Fig. 140A-B). Based on visual examination, the lines on the sleeves of the shirt suggest that the shirt was padded. The pattern on the sleeves and the buttons remind us of similar sleeves represented in

²⁵⁷ See *Figures from the retinue of Emperor John VIII Palaeologus, a scabbard*, 1438, Pen and ink, 18.9 x 26.5 cm, Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Margaret Day Blake collection, inv. 1961.331 recto. The drawing is reproduced in Syson, *Pisanello*, 33 fig 1.38. On the drawing see above page 134 n. 235.

²⁵⁸ See Arabic inscription, Emperor John VIII Palaeologus on horseback, members of his retinue, head of a horse, 1438, Pen and ink, 20x28.9 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. MI 1062 recto. The drawing is reproduced in Syson, 32, fig 1.36.

²⁵⁹ For a seventeenth-century reproduction of the medal see <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/460849?img=1>

other Western examples. See, for example, the soldier on the right of a late-fourteenth-century carved alabaster Crucifixion in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 144A-B),²⁶⁰ or the actual garment found on a late-sixteenth-century fencing doublet now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Fig. 145A-B).²⁶¹

These indices are indeed present in another funerary monument, almost contemporary, found in Naples. The tomb of Ludovico Aldomorisco occupies the first and second lateral chapels on the south side of the church of San Lorenzo Maggiore (Fig. 146A-C). It is a monumental sculptural composition by Antonio Baboccio da Piperno, completed after Ludovico's death in 1421.²⁶² Ludovico Aldomorisco was an admiral and a close advisor to the King of Naples Ladislao of Durazzo (1376-1414), whose funerary monument was also executed around the same time for the church of San Giovanni da Carbonara by the Florentine artist Andrea Guardi. Both tombs, while radically different in conception, respond to a similar monumental commemorative sculptural programme particularly present in early fifteenth-century Naples.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Crucifixion [relief], late fourteenth century, carved alabaster, Given by Dr W. L. Hildburgh FSA, A.50-1946, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. For a description of the object see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O96316/the-crucifixion-relief-unknown/> Also see Francis W. Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters: With a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Oxford: Phaidon-Christie's, 1984).

²⁶¹ Fencing Doublet, ca. 1580, leather, silk, linen, cotton, Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, 1929, 29.158.175, Metropolitan Museum New York. For a description of the fencing doublet see <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/23241> See James G. Mann, Mario Scalini, and Janet Arnold, 'Two early seventeenth century fencing doublets', *Waffen- und Kostümkunde XXI* (1979): 107.

²⁶² On the monumental tomb for Ludovico Aldomorisco in San Lorenzo Maggiore in Naples, see Nicolas Bock, 'Honor et Gratia. Das Grabmal des Ludovico Aldomoresco als Beispiel familiärer Selbstdarstellung im spätmittelalterlichen Neapel', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 24 (1997): 109–34; Alessandra Rullo, *Il sepolcro di Ludovico Aldomorisco di Antonio Baboccio da Piperno nella chiesa di San Lorenzo Maggiore in Napoli: le vicende del suo allestimento e una nuova ipotesi sull'originaria collocazione*, n.d. - forthcoming.

²⁶³ On the commission of monumental burials in lateral naves of Neapolitan churches in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Caroline Bruzelius, 'The Dead Come to Town: Preaching, Burying, and Building in the Mendicant Orders', in *The Year 1300 and the Creation of a New European Architecture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 203–24; Francesco Aceto, Stefano D'Ovidio, and Scirocco,

Aldomorico's tomb is composed of a sarcophagus raised from the ground floor on four caryatids (Fig. 146A). On the two longer flanks of the sarcophagus are two narrative scenes, sculpted in high and mid relief. On one side is the depiction of the Presentation of Ludovico to the Virgin (Fig. 146B), and on the other, the Presentation of Ludovico to the Eternal Father. In the first, Ludovico is depicted wearing a ceremonial courtly dress (Fig. 146B-C), the shirt of which can be compared to the long-sleeved vest in the fresco portrait of Manuel Palaiologos.

Even though the sarcophagus of Ludovico Aldomorisco is made of stone, the rendition of his costume shows similar, albeit not identical, attributes to that of the depiction of the costume in the funerary monument of Manuel Palaiologos in Hagioi Theodoroi (Fig. 146B-C). The costume of Ludovico Aldomorisco is made of two main elements: an upper cape or mantle with furred trim, held in place by an upper long collar kept tight around the neck, and allowed to fall free along the body of the portrayed figure; and a lower embroidered tunic with long sleeves left loose around the biceps and kept tight on the forearms by a row of round buttons (Fig. 146C). By comparison, Manuel Palaiologos' garment also has furred trim, but it is kept tight around the waist by a belt, while the lower vest also shows an under garment, a tunic, with a treatment of the fabric surface with long parallel lines and buttons (Fig. 139, Fig. 140A-B).

eds., *La chiesa e il convento di santa Chiara: committenza artistica, vita religiosa e progettualità politica nella Napoli di Roberto d'Angiò e Sancia di Maiorca* (Battipaglia: Laveglia & Carlone, 2014). In particular for a comparative study of the Franciscan foundations in Naples and the secular commissions in the Santa Chiara and San Lorenzo churches, see Alessandra Rullo, 'Patronato laico e chiese mendicanti a Napoli: i casi di S. Chiara e S. Lorenzo Maggiore', in *La chiesa e il convento di santa Chiara : committenza artistica, vita religiosa e progettualità politica nella Napoli di Roberto d'Angiò e Sancia di Maiorca* (Battipaglia: Laveglia & Carlone, 2014), 361–84.

The details in the funerary monuments are still revealing of some shared conventions in courtly dress codes. These details indicate a visual cultural context where individuals of high rank were adopting dress codes that, if not entirely shared, were at a minimum interpreted with visual similarities in the cultural production processes of different courts. These courts were very much in communication as testified by the historical documented exchanges between the courts of the Kingdom of Naples, the Kingdom of Cyprus and the Byzantine Empire, and as shown by similar strategies in establishing dynastic alliances: King Ladislao of Durazzo's second wife was Maria de Lusignan of Cyprus, belonging to the same royal family of Isabelle de Lusignan, wife of the first Byzantine despot of Mystras.²⁶⁴ The connection between the late Byzantine Empire and the Lusignan family was important and reinforced again in the very last phase of the Byzantine Empire by the marriage between Helena Palaiologina, daughter of Theodore II Palaiologos and Cleophe Malatesti and granddaughter of Manuel II Palaiologos, and John II King of Cyprus.²⁶⁵

The shirt and the buttons worn by the figure are indices of Western iconographic standards adopted by the artist responsible for this fresco. The artist and the patron of the fresco clearly wanted to express the status of the portrayed subject, not only addressing his imperial connection but also addressing a social status that allowed him to be portrayed in the highest fashion of the period, influenced by Western canons or Western ways of representing these canons. The costume is in a sense a generalized rendition of a high standard individual, whose role at court is made clear with a sequence of visual indices that speak of a large pan-Mediterranean context.

²⁶⁴ On the dynastic alliance between the kingdom of Naples and the kingdom of Cyprus, see Hill, *A History of Cyprus: The Frankish Period, 1192–1432*, esp. 465.

²⁶⁵ Ioanna Christoforaki, 'Sainted Ladies and Wicked Harlots: Perceptions of Gender in Medieval Cyprus', in *Engendering Aphrodite: Women and Society in Ancient Cyprus* (Boston, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2002), 157–68, esp. 165.

The man portrayed in the funerary monument is presented as a member of the elites of Mystras, elites that defined themselves as in a dialogue – visually transferred to the costume worn by Manuel – with a broader international community.

There is evidence of these type of garments in circulation in the Peloponnese. Sphrantzes was freed in 1429 from jail in Patras, where the lord was Pandolfo Malatesta, Cleophe's brother, although at that particular time he was in Italy to try and find resources to defend himself from the Greeks. Sphrantzes was advised to try and meet Constantine Palaiologos, so from Patras he went to Glarentza, and then from there to Slavizza near Riolo. Sphrantzes recounts that, while at the home of Giovanni Rosata in Slavizza on 5 May 1429, he received as a gift a 'green damasked double tabarion from Lucca of great value, lined with a nice green wool cloth, a beret of Thessaloniki, lined of scarlet silk embroidered with red gold thread, a red damasked mantle lined with a heavy cloth, short green trousers, damasked and embroidered in gold, a green sheet and an inlaid sword'.²⁶⁶

All of the evidence in this chapter has pointed to the fact that the socio-political context of Mystras is embodied, at the court, by the Latin *basilissai*. Despite being a Byzantine imperial court, Mystras had Western indices as strong as those found in Crete or Rhodes, where the presence of Venetian rulers or Western traders provided stronger links to the west than Mystras had. The evidence in this chapter suggests that the explanation for these Western traits is the indexing of the direct or indirect agency of Latin women and their courts, who were exogenous, politically powerful

²⁶⁶ 'ταμπάριον διπλὸν χαμουχᾶν πράσινον ἀπὸ τὴν Λούκκαν ἀξιόλογον, μετὰ καὶ πρασίνης τζόχας καὶ καλῆς ἐνδεδυμένον, σκούφιαν Θεσσαλονικαίαν μετὰ χρυσοκοκκίνου χασδίου ἐνδεδυμένην, καβάδι χρεμεζῆν χαμουχᾶν μετὰ βαρέου καταράχου ἐνδεδυμένον, κουρτζουβάκιν χαμουχᾶν χρυσὸν προύσινον καὶ φωτᾶν προύσινον καὶ σπαθὶν ἐγκεκοσμημένον', Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, 19.4, vv. 7-12, 56-9.

vehicles for these cultural traits over the course of a century. In the next chapter we will see how the documentary evidence we have for one of these, Cleophe Malatesti, reinforces the strong role these women had at court, and how their Italianate style was a noticeable feature of their presence.

III Cleophe and Ciriaco, cultural ambassadors at the court of Mystras

III.1 Introduction

Isabelle de Lusignan, Bartholomea Acciaiuoli and Cleophe Malatesti were important determinants of the cultural environment of Mystras and Morea. As we saw in the previous chapter, these three women were catalysts of artistic endeavours and relevant historical cultural events, which contributed to shaping this environment. They did so at a court that, while coherent with its Byzantine cultural heritage and Orthodox religious tradition, was also affected and renewed by the presence of these Western women.¹

While evidence of the influence the three women had at court mostly pertains to artefacts, a few archival and primary sources exist in relation to Cleophe Malatesti. This evidence is important because it allows us to create a more detailed portrait of Cleophe as Latin *basilissa* at the court of Mystras, and to investigate her agency, as it transpires through the relations she established at court. These documents demonstrate the political role of these Latin women and of the diplomatic strategies promoted by their families in shaping the cultural policies and religious actions in Morea.

¹ Exemplary is the case of Isabelle de Lusignan. See Zakythenos, 'Une princesse française à la cour de Mistra au XIVe siècle. Isabelle de Lusignan Cantacuzène'. See also above ch. II.3-The architrave – Isabelle de Lusignan's agency, 97-108.

This chapter allows us to link primary sources to the expression of agency through indices. For example, in relation to one of Cleophe's letters, we show how an index of her agency is a musical composition of Guillaume Dufay. In the last section, we move from primary sources to a drawing by Ciriaco d'Ancona to show how Cleophe is embedded in a chain of primary and secondary agencies that connects Italian humanists, travellers like Ciriaco, intellectuals at the court of Mystras and Cleophe herself. Both the drawing and the musical composition allow us to link the primary sources related to Cleophe to indices of the agency of the Latin *basilissa*, illustrating through iconographic representation and music the complexity of the pathways through which such agency is expressed.

III.2 The documents

Between October 1426 and July 1428 Cleophe Malatesti was at the centre of an epistolary exchange amongst members of the Malatesti family (Table 8).² Related to these exchanges between Cleophe and her Italian relatives are also a series of other documents that need to be considered, as they contribute to detailing the complexity of the role of Cleophe at court. These are a letter written by Pandolfo Malatesti, the Catholic bishop of Patras and Cleophe's brother, to the Senate of the Venice

² Four letters in the Archivio di Stato di Mantova are by Cleophe herself, written to her sister Paola Malatesti Gonzaga in Mantua. Replies to these letters by Paola Malatesti Gonzaga have not survived. However, Paola wrote two other letters concerning Cleophe's condition in Mystras to Pope Martin V and to her sister-in-law Battista di Montefeltro. The latter does not survive but Battista di Montefeltro, in reply to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga, wrote reporting that she had managed to gather through ambassadors travelling through Mystras. In the same epistolary exchange, Battista di Montefeltro also wrote to Pope Martin V. The first five primary sources have been studied and published by Anna Falcioni in a 2004 essay. See Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo'. Also by Falcioni on Cleophe see Falcioni, *Le donne di casa Malatesti*. The letter by Battista to Pope Martin V is not published by Falcioni. It can be found in Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, 189-90. The six letters have been republished in Falcioni, *Le donne di casa Malatesti*, vol. II, 964-8. See above introduction for an overview of the textual sources, ch. I.5, The sources, 43-50. For transcriptions of these letters see below Appendix 01, 339-343.

Republic, and two official deliberations of the Senate, in response, concerning Cleophe and her husband, Theodore II Palaiologos.³

These documents reveal an articulated network of negotiations between Mystras and Patras in Morea, the Italian cities where members of the Malatesti family resided, and cities such as Rome and Venice, which were interested in maintaining an active role in the negotiations between the Byzantine court in Mystras and Italian polities.

The chronology of the letters and Venetian and Papal documents is fully reconstructed for the first time as follows (Table 8):

- On 5 October 1426 Cleophe wrote to her sister Paola Malatesti Gonzaga [Letter 1] (Fig. 147, Fig. 148);⁴
- Sometime between October 1426 and February 1427 Paola Malatesti Gonzaga wrote to her sister in law Battista di Montefeltro [lost letter];
- On 22 January 1427 Paola Malatesti Gonzaga wrote to Pope Martin V [Letter 2];⁵
- On 12 February 1427 Battista di Montefeltro wrote to her sister in law Paola Malatesti Gonzaga [Letter 3];⁶
- On 26 January 1428 Cleophe Malatesti wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga (Fig. 149, Fig. 150) [Letter 4];⁷

³ These two deliberations are published along with other deliberations concerning Morea in Sathas, *Μνημεία Ἑλληνικῆς ιστορίας. Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, tom. I, 186-90 nn. 118-123.

⁴ The original copy of this letter is in the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 128r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607. For a transcription of this letter see below Letter 1 in Appendix 01, 339.

⁵ A copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2390, c. 37r and it is published in the documentary appendix Falcioni, 607. For a transcription of this letter see below Letter 2 in Appendix 01, 339.

⁶ The letter by Battista da Montefeltro is at the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, Affari in Rimini, busta 1081, n. 54. It is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 607-8. For a transcription of this letter see below Letter 3 in Appendix 01, 340.

- On 20 March 1428 Cleophe Malatesti wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga (Fig. 151, Fig. 152, Fig. 153) [Letter 5];⁸
- Sometime between March and June 1428 Pandolfo Malatesti wrote to the Senate of the Venice Republic [lost letter];
- On 9 June 1428 the Senate voted to act in favour of Cleophe and informed her brother Pandolfo Malatesti;⁹
- On 18 July 1428 Cleophe Malatesti wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga (Fig. 154, Fig. 155) [Letter 6].¹⁰

Counterbalancing these documents we have several historical accounts from the Byzantine context, provided by Sphrantzes in his *chronicon*, and five funerary compositions written to celebrate Cleophe after her death in 1433.¹¹

The funerary orations still in existence today are:¹²

- one by Georgios Gemistos Plethon;¹³
- one by the future Cardinal Bessarion;¹⁴

⁷ The original copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 145r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 608. For a transcription of this letter see below Letter 4 in Appendix 01, 341.

⁸ The original copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 144r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 608. For a transcription of this letter see below Letter 5 in Appendix 01, 342.

⁹ See Sathas, *Μνημεία Ελληνικής ιστορίας. Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, tom. I, 188 n. 119.

¹⁰ The original copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 146r-v and it is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 609. For a transcription of this letter see below Letter 6 in Appendix 01, 343.

¹¹ Sphrantzes reports the death of Cleophe on 18 April 1433. See Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, 73.

¹² The monodies by Plethon, Pepagomenos and Cheilas are in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, vol. IV, 144-75. The most comprehensive study of the Greek texts on Cleophe see Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', 1994; Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo'.

¹³ Plethon's monody 'ἐπὶ τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ' is in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, vol. IV, 161-75. The monody is contained in several codexs. The list of the codexs is in Λάμπρος, pp. 161-2.

- one by the monk Ioannes;¹⁵
- one by Demetrios Pepagomenos, Cleophe's physician;¹⁶
- one by Nikephoros Cheilas.¹⁷

Two poems were also written for Cleophe: one by Bessarion,¹⁸ and one by Theodore II Palaiologos.¹⁹

This collection of primary and literary sources contributes to a complex portrait of the role of Cleophe in Mystras as the Catholic wife of an Orthodox despot. This and other inter-faith marriages had already been discussed and debated at the time of Council of Constance, when they had been first planned by the Papal and Byzantine courts, an issue that historians have tried to examine and understand.²⁰

¹⁴ Bessarion's monody 'ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρίᾳ ἡμῶν, τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ καὶ μακαρίτιδι βασιλίσσει κυρᾷ Κλεόπῃ Παλαιολογίνῃ' by the "ἱερομονάχος" is transcribed in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 154-60. The monody can be found in Parisinus Graecus 2540 ff. 61r-70r, Bibliothèque National de France, Paris.

¹⁵ Monk Ioannes's monody 'ἐπὶ τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ ἡμῶν βασιλίσσει κυρίᾳ Κλεόπῃ' is transcribed in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, vol. IV, 153. The monody can be found in the codex Mattiensis. Gr. CXXV vol. XXIX f. 954, Regiae Bibliothecae Matritensis, Madrid.

¹⁶ Demetrios Pepagomenos' monody 'ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρίᾳ ἡμῶν, τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ καὶ μακαρίτιδι βασιλίσσει κυρᾷ Κλεόπῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίνῃ' is transcribed, translated into German and commented in Schmalzbauer, 'Eine bisher unedierte Monodie auf Kleope Palaiologina von Demetrios Pepagomenos'.

¹⁷ Nikephoros Cheilas' monody 'ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρίᾳ ἡμῶν, τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ καὶ μακαρίτιδι βασιλίσσει Κλεόπῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίνῃ' by is transcribed in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 144-52. The monody can be found in the codex Parisinus Graecus 2540, ff. 71r-81v.

¹⁸ Bessarion's poem 'ἐπὶ τῷ τάφῳ τῆς μακαρίτιδος βασιλισσῆς κυρᾷς Κλεόπῃς τῆς Παλαιολογίνης' is transcribed in Λάμπρος, 176. The poem can be found in the codex Marcianus Graecus 433 f. 48r, Biblioteca Marciana, Venezia.

¹⁹ The poem by Theodore II Palaiologos is in Cod. Marc. Gr. 533, c. 48v edited in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, vol. III, 278. The poem is translated into Italian by Silvia Ronchey in Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', 1994, 58.

²⁰ On the presence at the Constance Council of the Byzantine delegations, see Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, 322-326, 334-335, 348 n. 66. Here Barker points out that '[...] Among the subjects discussed then was a demonstration of cordial intentions on both sides through the projected marriage of Manuel's two oldest sons to Latin princesses.' in Barker, 325. On the political agenda of Martin V and Manuel II Palaiologos see Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo'. In particular on the letter by Pope Martin V, authorising the inter-faith marriage between the sons of Manuel II and Latin princesses, see Syropoulos, *Les mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, 108.

The historical facts described by these letters and documents portray a dual life, one in which Cleophe appears endangered by private and public issues related to her role at court, while at the same time appearing to lead a very conventional life as a *basilissa* in the context of the Despotate.

This dual narrative is taken at face value here. It might well be the case that Cleophe was publically a role model of virtues as wife of the Moreote despot, adhering to traditional court conventions, but, at the same time, struggling in her domestic life. Battista da Montefeltro, in writing to Pope Martin V, asked the pope to intervene in favour and defence of Cleophe since she was in a ‘domestic war and an internal fight’.²¹

The letters testify to the domestic battle Cleophe was experiencing, and convey a series of elements that should be analysed in relation to the established court conventions in Mystras and the needs of a Catholic woman, someone brought to a Byzantine court while being asked – by Papal imposition – to maintain the traditions and mores of the Catholic religion.²² The tension Cleophe complained about is revealing of her lifestyle at court and can be used to frame the discussion of how the late Palaiologan court in Mystras was interacting, adapting and rejecting cultural standards that were imported by Catholic wives of the Despots.

²¹ Battista writes that Cleophe was in “a bello utique domestico et intestina pugna” in Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, 189 n. 6; Neculai Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l’histoire des Croisades au XVe siècle*. (Paris, 1899), vol. I, 197.

²² Ronchey, ‘Malatesta - Paleologhi: un’alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo’, 522 n. 5.

Evidence provided by this set of letters and documents helps to inquire into the visual and material cultural conventions, musical traditions and literary production that are linked to these primary sources and also to address the nature and the complexity of the exchanges between Greeks and Latins.

III.3 Letter, 5 October 1426

On 5 October 1426 Cleophe Malatesti wrote to her sister Paola Malatesti Gonzaga.²³ The letter, now in the Archivio di Stato in Mantova, consists of a folio with the text of the missive written on the recto and the address of the receiver on the verso. The letter is written in medieval Italian with a refined calligraphy, with frequent use of abbreviated formulations that are reminiscent of diplomatic and legal writing employed by Italian courts in the fifteenth century (Fig. 147, Fig. 148, Table 3).²⁴

It is addressed to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga, sister of the writer Cleophe Malatesti, who, in 1409, had married Gianfrancesco Gonzaga (born 1395 - died 1444), first marquis of Mantua.²⁵ The nature of the letter is private, mostly intended to inform Paola Gonzaga of the personal condition of the writer. In the first line, Cleophe refers to a certain Antonio da Fossombrone, who, we are told, had visited Cleophe in Mystras. Cleophe acknowledges that, at the time of sending the letter, Antonio da Fossombrone might have already informed, or may be about to inform, Paola Gonzaga of Cleophe's actual condition, but she nevertheless avoids revealing too

²³ For a transcription of the first letter by Cleophe to her sister Paola see below Letter 1 in Appendix 01, 339. Also in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607 n. 1.

²⁴ For an English version of the letter see my translation at Table 3.

²⁵ For a bibliography on Gonzaga and Malatesti relations, see Isabella Lazzarini, 'Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, marchese di Mantova', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2000).

many details. This mode of delivering information – an oral account, referred to in the actual text of the letter – clearly implies a context where third parties might have intercepted and read these letters, thus requiring secrecy.²⁶

Cleophe describes how, while Antonio was in Mystras, she was not feeling well and was still unwell at the time of writing, and was waiting to receive news of her sister. Indirectly Cleophe seems to acknowledge that, as early as the 5 October 1426, Paola ‘would have been particularly informed about all matters’²⁷ by Antonio, who would have told her how Cleophe was really doing, a situation that Cleophe only briefly addressed when she wrote that she was ‘with the heaviest sorrows and with very little comfort’ (Table 3, Table 4).²⁸

It is important to note that Cleophe addresses Antonio as ‘ambassador of our lord’ (Table 5).²⁹ The use of the adjective “our” with the noun “lord” might refer to an ambassador who was very close to Cleophe’s and Paola’s father, Malatesta IV Malatesti and, because he was most likely from the city of Fossombrone, which in those years was under the rule of the Malatesti, he might have actually been a member of the family.

²⁶ See in general Margaret Mullett, *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium*, Collected Studies (Aldershot England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007). See in particular the referencing of Cleophe to trusted individuals in her letters: Antonio da Fossombrone in “Letter 1” and Megha Cartofila in “Letter 5” respectively in Appendix 01, 339, 342.

²⁷ On the third and forth lines of the letter Cleophe writes “Et perché so che da esso misser Antonio seriti stata particolarmente / advisata de omni cosa” on the recto of c. 128 b. 2391 the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*. See below Letter 1 in Appendix 01, 339.

²⁸ On the third line of the letter Cleophe writes “cum gravissime pene et cum poco contentamento” on the recto of c. 128 b. 2391 the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*. See below Letter 1 in Appendix 01, 339.

²⁹ On the first line of the letter Cleophe writes “ambasciatore de nostro signore” on the recto of c. 128 b. 2391 the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*. See below Letter 1 in Appendix 01, 339.

On this basis, the Antonio referred to in the letter might be Antonio Malatesti da Fossombrone, who was a prelate responsible in 1429 for the cathedral of Fossombrone and later, in 1435, was appointed bishop of Cesena by Pope Eugenius IV. He died in 1475. A funerary monument dedicated to Antonio da Fossombrone is still visible in the cathedral in Cesena.³⁰

His duties as the prelate responsible for the cathedral allow us to infer that Antonio was roughly the same age as Cleophe, at the time of his travels to Morea as ambassador of Cleophe's father. The fact that Cleophe and Antonio were relatives, would have provided an appropriate setting, according to the Byzantine imperial standards at the court of Mystras, for the wife of the despot of Morea to meet Antonio to discuss private matters.

This is a revealing detail, transpiring from this letter, especially if one takes into consideration the fact that the actual conversation between the two, which must have concerned Cleophe's unfortunate situation at court, was only entrusted to an oral report that Antonio was meant to deliver in person to Paola.³¹ Antonio's role as an oral ambassador does not differ from that of a letter bearer in Byzantine epistolary exchanges from the ninth and tenth century. While commenting on the representations of the letter-exchange at folia 128r-v (Fig. 156), in the Madrid

³⁰ The funerary monument of Antonio Malatesti da Fossombrone is inside the Cesena cathedral and was commissioned by Antonio in 1467 to Antonio di Duccio, see Pietro Turci, ed., *La cattedrale di Cesena*, Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cesena, n.d., 18.

³¹ On the oral nature of epistolary exchanges, see Margaret Mullett, 'Writing in Early Mediaeval Byzantium', in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 156–85. Also reprinted in Mullett, *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium*, 2, VI.

manuscript of the *Synopsis Istorion* of John Skylitzes,³² Margaret Mullett analyses the importance of oral transactions associated with the letter-exchange and points out that letters in early medieval Byzantium were ‘multi-media experience where oral, visual and written elements combined in an expected ceremonial’.³³

The meetings between Cleophe and Antonio, Antonio and Paola, and ultimately Cleophe and Paola, through the intermediation of the letter and of Antonio, are linked ceremonials denoting the status that was accorded to the despot’s wife. She was able to receive ambassadors publicly, but could only have private meetings with Antonio, a dispensation presumably due to the fact that Antonio and Cleophe were probably cousins. The letter on 5 October 1426 and the message from Cleophe, carried orally by Antonio, must have been delivered successfully to her sister Paola since the series of letters and interventions outlined above started from these communications. After this letter, Cleophe’s family and connections responded to her requests. We will return to this point when analysing some of the other documents.

Another important element of this first letter is the refined calligraphic standard employed in its composition. The lettering is accurate and uniform throughout the text, revealing the writing standards and erudition of the actual compiler. The writing was probably carried out using a quill equipped with a point, cut horizontally. The instrument appears to have been held with regularity and consistency through the whole text and the resulting calligraphy shows a careful use of the cut point, as demonstrated by the regularity of vertical, horizontal, diagonal and curvilinear

³² For a facsimile of the manuscript, see John Skylitzes, *Skylitzes Matritensis*, ed. Sebastián Cirac Estopañán (Barcelona: Herder, 1965), I: Reproducciones y miniaturas.

³³ Mullett, ‘Writing in Early Mediaeval Byzantium’, 184-5.

strokes. The persistency of gesture is clearly visible not only from the regularity of letters such as “a”, “o” or “n” but even more clearly from the regularity of more complex letters such as “h” or “g” that combine executional strokes in different directions (Table 6, Table 7).

The text is not only complex in terms of its calligraphy. Even though it is compiled in a simple and familiar Italian language, the text’s sophistication is uncommon for a private letter, as shown by the use of Latin forms, nouns addressing notable individuals, and abbreviated forms for conjunctions, prepositions and personal adjectives. As an example of this, suffice it to consider the first two opening sentences of the first line, where we can identify some of these traits. In the first line we find: “Illustris” and “pontens” both Latin forms, the abbreviated forms “dna” and “honorand” for *domina* and *honoranda* and the abbreviation of “cari^{ma}” for *carissima*; in the second line “ch”- abbreviated form for *che* -, “mes” for *messer* and “nro” for *nostro*. All these idiosyncrasies are evidence of the knowledge and scholarly training of the author, and resemble the calligraphy and language similar to those in use amongst diplomats and clerks employed by north Italian courts and humanists (Table 7).³⁴

By comparing this letter with the other three Cleophe writes from Mystras, it is possible to note that it bears a more refined calligraphy than that of the others. This supports the hypothesis that, for a period of time, Cleophe must have had with her at court someone who could help her compile official documents and personal letters,

³⁴ For an introduction on humanist calligraphy in fifteenth-century Italy, see in general B. L. (Berthold Louis) Ullman, *The Origin and Development of Humanistic Script*. (Roma, Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 1960). On the debate about the regularization of handwriting, see Martin Davis, ‘Humanism in Script and Print in the Fifteenth Century’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, Jill Kraye [Ed.] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 47–62.

reporting on the meetings she had during official visits by foreign ambassadors in Mystras. This person must have been able to write with high diplomatic standards. It is of course impossible to guess the identity of such individual. It is, however, possible to infer that this person was someone trained in Italian schools, educated to serve as a clerk or an officer for compiling notarial and official documents of institutions such as the Senate of the Venice Republic.

A connection with the Senate, or more generally with the offices of Venice, can be strengthened by comparing the letter from Mystras to documents in the Venice archive and written around the same time. For example, the calligraphy of Cleophe's letter can be compared to the transcription of the deliberation of the Venetian Senate on 30 August 1420, sending a boat to transport Cleophe to Greece (Fig. 157).³⁵

The letter and its calligraphy are evidence of a social and diplomatic interaction that might have taken place between Cleophe, Antonio da Fossombrone and whoever was responsible for transcribing the letter, which Cleophe most likely dictated after the visit of Antonio in Mystras. This person must have been sent from Italy to the Peloponnese as a legate to accompany Cleophe Malatesti at the time of her wedding, or at least to be present at times in Mystras, as part of the personal court of the wife of the despot, probably to help her as a secretary in carrying out some of the diplomatic and court duties associated with her role.

As speculative as this inference might seem, the link of this unknown secretary to Venice and to other Italian polities is also supported by another piece of evidence.

³⁵ The deliberation is in Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Senato Misti*, Registro 53, f. 72 r.

The letter is written on a sheet of paper that, while not bearing recognizable watermarks, still shows a manufacture of Italian extraction. In fact, similar paper is employed for the other letters written by Cleophe and is also found in some of the sections of a Greek manuscript, whose origin is historically linked to Mystras. The Codex Mutinensis Graecus 144 - *Mut. Gr. 144* was written and assembled in Mystras between the early forties and the early fifties of the fifteenth century (Fig. 158).³⁶ The *Mut. Gr. 144* was not only put together with folia gatherings made of vellum, but also contained – something unusual in the context of late Palaiologan manuscript production – gatherings made out of paper that is similar to the kind used for the letters by Cleophe.³⁷

This type of paper was also used for the other three letters sent from Mystras. In particular two of these letters, the ones sent on 26 January (Fig. 149) and on 18 July 1428 (Fig. 154), were written on paper showing not only the same grain but also distinctive watermarks. In the case of the first of these two letters, the watermark is a flower with five petals, visible at the centre of the page, close to the signatures of the Malatesti (Fig. 150). In the second, the watermark is in the centre, near the lower margin of the page, and is cut right in the middle (Fig. 155). This second watermark shows the stylized motif of a three-peaked mountain with a cross, placed on top of the highest of the three peaks. Both watermarks are common in the context of paper production in Italy.³⁸ Similar watermarks are found in paper sheets of this time

³⁶ The codex *Mut. Gr. 144* in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena, see in general Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', 124–25. See also above ch. I.5 - The sources, esp. 46.

³⁷ On the paper gatherings forming the codex *Mut. Gr. 144* see De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. *Mut. Gr. 144*', 261–62.

³⁸ On the variation and distribution of the three-peaked mountain, or of the three mountains, watermark see 'Monts, montagnes ou collines' Charles-Moïse Briquet, *Les filigranes* (Genève: A. Jullien, 1907), vol. III, 588-600.

period employed for different kinds of text, meant to be used both for epistolary purposes, archival documents and for the transmission of knowledge.³⁹

Amongst the numerous examples of use of this kind of paper in Western courts, one is of particular interest for the purposes of this research: the manuscripts of musical compositions of the Flanders-born composer Guillaume Dufay who was active in several Italian courts between the late fourteenth to the early decades of the fifteenth century.⁴⁰ Even though their origin relates to the broader context of the cultural and artistic production of Italianate courts, they can also be directly linked to the historical facts and context related to Cleophe Malatesti and her family. This is an instance where historical facts reveal how a physical object and an artistic product can be an index of a broader set of agencies, and that can show just how strong the Latin *basilissa* could be as a secondary agent in the broader web of relationships linking Mystras to Italy.

Sometime between the beginning of 1418 and the summer of 1420 the count of Rimini, Carlo Malatesti (born 1368 – died 1429), uncle of the young Cleophe and the most prominent figure of the Malatesti family, commissioned Guillaume Dufay to

³⁹ On Italian paper production in the fourteenth and fifteenth century and its European distribution, see Emanuela Di Stefano, 'European and Mediterranean perspectives on the paper produced in Camerino-Pioraco and Fabriano at the apogee of its medieval development (14th-15th century)', in *Papier im mittelalterlichen Europa: Herstellung und Gebrauch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 47–67. See also in general Bernd Schneidmüller, Sandra Schultz, and Carla (Historian) Meyer, eds., *Papier im mittelalterlichen Europa: Herstellung und Gebrauch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). The three peacks mountain watermark is also found on the paper of the Codex 5 of the Metropolis of Monemvasia and Sparta (1432). See *The City of Mystras*, 188-9.

⁴⁰ The secondary literature on Guillaume Dufay is considerable and it includes Stanley Boorman, 'The Early Renaissance and Dufay', *The Musical Times* 115, no. 1577 (1974): 560–65; Howard Mayer Brown, 'Guillaume Dufay and the Early Renaissance', *Early Music* 2, no. 4 (1974): 219–33; Albert Lovegnée, *Le Wallon Guillaume Dufay, ca 1398-1474* (Charleroi; Namur: Institut Jules Destrée; Dejaie, 1980); David Fallows, *Dufay* (London: J.M. Dent, 1987); Hans Ryschawy, Rolf W. Stoll, and Hans-Otto Korth, *Guillaume Dufay* (München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1988); Massimo Mila and Simone Monge, *Guillaume Dufay* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997); Reinhard Strohm, *Guillaume Du Fay, Martin Le France Und Die Humanistische Legende Der Musik*, vol. 2008 (Winterthur: Amadeus, 2007).

write a musical piece to celebrate the wedding of his niece to Theodore II Palaiologos.⁴¹ The wedding was arranged as part of the diplomatic relations between the Byzantine Empire and Italian States with interests in the politics of the late Palaiologan Empire. The arrangement was most likely discussed in 1417-18 during the final phases of the Council of Constance between the delegates of Manuel II Palaiologos and the papal curia of then just elected Pope Martin V Colonna. It was in Constance that Carlo Malatesti and Guillaume Dufay also met.⁴²

Dufay composed an isorhythmic motet that is known by the first line of its lyrics, *Vasilissa ergo gaude, queen therefore rejoice*, an indication of the agency of the Latin *basilissa*, strong enough for the court to rejoice (Fig. 159, Fig. 160). The score and lyrics of the motet survive in three manuscripts: Bologna, Civico museo bibliografico musicale, *Q 15*, fols. 247v-248r, Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Canonici Misc. 213*, fols. 132v-133r, and Trento, Castel del Buon Consiglio, *MS 87*, fols. 57v-58r. These sets of transcriptions date from 1426 and the 1440s.⁴³

In the early fifteenth century this type of musical composition and related performances were considered the highest forms of cultural production, and an

⁴¹ On the motets by Guillaume Dufay, see Sandresky, 'The Golden Section in Three Byzantine Motets of Dufay'; Fallows, *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Canon. Misc. 213*; Julie E. Cumming, *The Motet in the Age of Du Fay* (Cambridge, UK; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴² 'It is generally assumed that he [Dufay] went to the Council of Konstanz (1414-18), either in the retinue of Jehan de Lens, Bishop of Cambrai, or that of Pierre d'Ailly, who had been Bishop of Cambrai when Du Fay was a chorister. This assumption is supported by his later connection with Carlo Malatesta, whom the composer could only have met at Konstanz, and also by the nature and transmission of his earliest datable composition, a Sanctus related to a similar work by Loqueville, employing as a cantus firmus a troped chant that was used at Cambrai as part of the recently compiled Mass to pray for the end of the Schism.' in Alejandro E. Planchart, 'Du Fay, Guillaume', Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed 5 November 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08268>.

⁴³ For a critical edition of these materials, see David Fallows, *The Songs of Guillaume Dufay: Critical Commentary to the Revision of Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae, Ser. 1, Vol. VI* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, Hanssler-Verlag: American Institute of Musicology, 1995).

essential part of high profile celebrations and events. Dufay was commissioned several times to write music for such occasions. For example, the *Nuper rosarum flores*, celebrating the opening of the Brunelleschi's dome for Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence,⁴⁴ the composition of a mass for St Anthony,⁴⁵ and – important for our discussion – the mass *Apostolo glorioso*, written for the re-consecration of St Andrew, the cathedral of Patras, whose bishop was none other than Pandolfo Malatesti, Cleophe's brother.⁴⁶ This last composition shows that Dufay was linked to members of the Malatesti family, and that he was asked to compose for singers and choirs active on both side of the Adriatic.

The many interactions between the Malatesti and Dufay reveal how relevant the role of the musician was as an agent of cultural promotion in the context of Italian courts. This is an important factor in considering the commission of Carlo Malatesti: though ephemeral, the motet would have been understood by both families as an important contribution to the wedding, and an expensive important gift.⁴⁷

Even though evidence of the role of secular music in the context of the late Imperial Byzantine family is limited, we can assume that court and secular music had a role.

For the purpose of this discussion it is important to note how *Vasilissa ergo gaude*

⁴⁴ Major studies dealing with *Nuper rosarum flores* are Charles W. Warren, 'Brunelleschi's Dome and Dufay's Motet', *The Musical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1973): 92–105; Craig Wright, 'Dufay's "Nuper Rosarum Flores"', King Solomon's Temple, and the Veneration of the Virgin', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47, no. 3 (1994): 395–441; Marvin Trachtenberg, 'Architecture and Music Reunited: A New Reading of Dufay's "Nuper Rosarum Flores" and the Cathedral of Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2001): 741–775.

⁴⁵ On this mass, see Eleonora M. Beck, 'Revisiting Dufay's Saint Anthony Mass and Its Connection to Donatello's Altar of Saint Anthony of Padua', *Music in Art* 26, no. 1/2 (2001): 5–19.

⁴⁶ Planchart, 'Du Fay, Guillaume'.

⁴⁷ During the late fourteenth and fifteenth century music compositions were presented and exchanged between courts as a form of gift giving: Musicians presented them to their patrons, see Rob C. Wegman, 'Musical Offerings in the Renaissance', *Early Music* 33, no. 3 (2005): 425–437, esp. 432, 437 n. 32.; They were also performed by court singers during visits to other courts see Pamela Starr, 'Musical Entrepreneurship in 15th-Century Europe', *Early Music* 32, no. 1 (2004): 119–134, esp. 121.

provides an insight into the practice of transmission of music, and provides a small but significant link between the cultural transmissions in Mystras and the Italian courts commissioning and copying Dufay's music. The paper used for transcription of the isometric motet in the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Canonici Misc. 213* in one of its folia, shows the watermark of the three-peaked mountain (Fig. 159, Fig. 160, Fig. 161).⁴⁸ The resemblance of the watermarks, the similarity of paper, and the direct link between the Malatesti and Dufay are suggestive elements of a plausible shared musical production on both sides of the Adriatic, implying that the Adriatic and the Mediterranean were linked not only in economic and political, but also in cultural terms. There is evidence of the appreciation of Western music in the late Byzantine court, such as that provided by the Turin Codex *J. II. 9*,⁴⁹ which contains music written around 1430s for the wedding of Anna de Lusignan from Cyprus to Ludovico of Savoia – the same Lusignan family that Isabelle de Lusignan belonged to - and the Dumbarton Oaks ivory pyxis with imperial Palaiologan families and a scene featuring musicians playing instruments in a ceremonial, non-religious, setting (Fig. 162A-B).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ David Fallows recognizes the watermark as the 2c typology, variant b, see Fallows, *Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Canon. Misc. 213*, 10 fig. 12. Also on the watermarks on the manuscript see *Ibid.* 7-8.

⁴⁹ On the codex Torino J. II. 9 see Isabella Fragalà Data, 'Anna di Cipro e Ludovico di Savoia: le nozze, la Libreria Ducale, il Codice Franco-Cipriota', in *Il codice J.II.9: Torino, Biblioteca nazionale universitaria* (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 1999).

⁵⁰ On the Dumbarton Oaks Pyxis with Imperial Families and Ceremonial Scenes (1403-1404), 3 x 4.3 (1.2 x 1.7), ivory, BZ.1936.24, and for a list of secondary sources on the pyxis, see Museum Dumbarton Oaks, 'Pyxis with Imperial Families and Ceremonial Scenes | Byzantine Collection | Museum | Dumbarton Oaks', Page, The Dumbarton Oaks Museum Collection, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://museum.doaks.org/Obj27443?sid=4845>.

III.4 Letters and documents in reply to Cleophe's first letter

Cleophe's first letter originated a sequence of responses and coordinated actions from members of the Malatesti family in different courts in Italy (Table 8).⁵¹ These documents help us understand the evolution of Cleophe's life at court from unhappy recluse to a much more integrated member of the court.

A few weeks after the first letter arrived in Mantua, on 22 January 1427, Paola Malatesti Gonzaga wrote to Pope Martin V reporting on the poor state of her sister in Morea.⁵² In this letter, Paola asks the pope whether he might intercede again on behalf of her sister. Paola thanks the pope for what he has already done to support Cleophe, but requests that he do more. Paola writes 'Much compensation is awaiting your Sanctity, for [...] the merciful support given to that poor child and your unhappy servant, my sister, to the present day'⁵³ and she continues 'only to whom who knows everything that is unveiled and open, [...] who is in charge of the [Christ's] flock, he will not allow her to die'.⁵⁴

Clearly Paola fears for the life of her sister, even though she does not provide details on what might be the cause of such danger. In the letter she urges the pope to act because, as she puts it in the letter, 'if the sheep were to feel abandoned, where

⁵¹ For a diagram with all the documents see vol. II of this dissertation at Table 8.

⁵² A copy of this letter is in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2390, c. 37r and it is published in the documentary appendix Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607. For a full transcription of the letter see below "Letter 2" in Appendix 02, 339-340.

⁵³ "Quanta retributione exspecte la Sanctità Vostra, apresso [...] de la pietosa subventione facta a quella povera figliola et ancilla sua infelice mia sorella fin al dì presente" from lines 1-3, c. 37r, b. 2390 in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*. Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607. For a full transcription of the letter see below "Letter 2" in Appendix 02, 339-340.

⁵⁴ "[...] solamente hèn noto a colui cui Omnia sunt nuda et aperta, [...] a chi hèn comesso el gre/ge non la permeterà perire", from lines 3 and 4, 5 c. 37r, b. 2390 in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*. This passage can be found in Falcioni, 607. For a full transcription of the letter see below "Letter 2" in Appendix 02, 339-340.

would she find her refuge in this century, to whom shall she recur, who will give her a hand'.⁵⁵ Clearly Paola suggests that the pope act on Cleophe's behalf, lest she find help outside the wedding arrangements that allowed the Catholic Italian noble woman to marry the Orthodox son of the Byzantine emperor. The agreement between the court of Manuel II Palaiologos and Pope Martin V had resulted in a Papal bull that allowed the inter-faith marriage, under the condition that Cleophe remain Catholic.⁵⁶ The Byzantine court accepted the fact that a Catholic woman was residing in Mystras.

It is possible that what Paola is suggesting in her letter is that Cleophe might be at the point of considering conversion to Orthodoxy in order to improve her situation at court. This possibility is also implied by two other sources: the first is a passage of the letter written by Battista da Montefeltro to Paola on 12 February 1427 in reply to a now lost letter, in which Paola was probably asking for information regarding Cleophe.⁵⁷ The second is a letter from Martin V to Cleophe in which the pope makes a precise reference to the consequences she might incur if she were to convert to the Orthodox faith.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ "[...] che se la pegorsella sua se sentisse abandonada da lui, dove seria el suo refugio in questo seculo / a chi deveria ricorrere, chi gle porgeria mano" from lines 4 and 5 in ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, Mantova e Paesi. This passage can be found in Falcioni, 607. For a full transcription of the letter see below "Letter 2" in Appendix 02, 339-340.

⁵⁶ On the letter by Pope Martin V, authorising the inter-faith marriage between the sons of Manuel II and Latin princesses, see Syropoulos, *Les mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438-1439)*, 108. For the transcription of the letter see Rinaldi, *Annales Ecclesiastici ab anno MCXCVIII ubi Card. Baronius desinit*, ad anno 1418, n° 17.

⁵⁷ For a full transcription of the letter by Battista da Montefeltro see below "Letter 3" in Appendix 02, 340. Copy of the letter is at the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, Affari in Rimini, busta 1081, n. 54. It is also published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607-8.

⁵⁸ The letter by Pope Martin V to Cleophe is in the Codex Barber. Lat. 878, p. 229-230. For a transcription of this letter see Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée* Vol. I, 301-2. For a comment of this letter see Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo', 522 and 522 n. 7.

Battista's letter is revealing since it is based on two direct eyewitness accounts she received via Cleophe's brother, Pandolfo Malatesti, archbishop of Patras, who was also involved in the network of people trying to help Cleophe Malatesti in Mystras. Battista's report offers several insights into the complex situation Cleophe was facing at court, as well as more detailed information on the court standards she had to respect and maintain as wife of the despot.

She explains that Paola previously had written to her asking to identify "someone" who could intercede on Cleophe's behalf. In response, Battista writes '[...] I inform you that our Lord Pandolfo and monsignor Archbishop, in order to see if any possible measure could be taken for helping that unfortunate sister of ours, was then willing to know anything about her intention and, in order to receive information on this regard, wrote to Sir Michele, who is also in Patras, [requesting him] to go and visit her and to try hard to know as much as possible how she was doing directly from her soul'.⁵⁹ Battista also explains that Sir Michele was ill and a certain Christofano, instead of him, came to Patras with news regarding Cleophe. Christofano reported to Pandolfo, who in turn then wrote the report to Battista, who then transcribed it in her letter to Paola. The report is that 'she [Cleophe] is the most Greek in the world in her beliefs and she carries a sign of what she confesses as faith and converted the little/poor soul'.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ "[...] ve aviso ch'el signor nostro Pandolfo et monsignor l'arcivescovo, per vedere se modo alchuno se possese mai tenere / circa l'aiuto de quella disaventurada nostra sorella, desideravano mò de sapere qualche cosa / de sua intention et per information de ciò, scripsero a ser Michele, quale è a Patras, che andasse <a> / a visitarla et sforzasse de sentire de l'animo suo, quanto el posseva." from lines 2-5 in n. 54, busta 1081, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, *Affari in Rimini*. This passage is also transcribed in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607. The letter by Battista da Montefeltro is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 607-8. For a transcription of this letter see below "Letter 3" in Appendix 02, 340.

⁶⁰ "Vero è che Christofano è venudo a Patras et ha reportato lì ch'ella è / più perfida greca del mondo et in segno de ciò ch'ella disputa de la fè et ingegnasse de pervertire / l'agnolella." from lines 5-6 in n.

Based on this account, it seems that between October 1426 and February 1427 Cleophe might have indeed converted to Orthodoxy, therefore confirming Paola's fears, shared with Martin V, of the possible conversion of her sister. But then Battista provides further evidence of the situation of the Malatesti at court and of the kind of relations the wife of the despot had with her family, the Byzantine diplomacy, and the Papal court. Battista adds 'Now for the reasons you [Paola] know we do not think she [Cleophe] trusted him [Christofano]' and reveals she believes Cleophe pretended to have undergone conversion: 'she has done all of this as a simulation', *simulatamente*. In order to prove this, Battista reports the words of the second eyewitness account. She writes 'as a proof of this simulation, he [Pandolfo] sent a nobleman from Padua, whose name is Iacomo de Santo Agnolo who is in Patras and who spoke to her in secret and she lamented herself about what she had done'. And then Battista transcribed in her letter to Paola what she probably read in Pandolfo's letter to her, where he reported what Iacomo had heard directly from Cleophe. Battista wrote 'she answered: 'the tunic does not make the monk, even though I was anointed with a bit of oil, it is sure that in my heart I am very honest as I have ever been', and this to us seems more credible'.⁶¹

Aside from the specific content of the letter, these passages are indicative of the nature of the communication between these Malatesti women. They used

54, busta 1081, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, *Affari in Rimini*. This passage is also transcribed in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607.

⁶¹ "Mó, per le casion che vui savide, non pensamo ch'ella se fide de lui et che tucto questo / la faccia simulatamente, et in segno de ciò gli mandò un gentilomo di Padoa, che se chiama Iacomo / de Sancto Agnlo <gli> che sta a Patras et parlogli in secreto, dolendose de quell ch'ella havea facto; / ella gli respose: «Habito no fa Monaco, bench'eo sia stata unta con un poco d'olio, sia certa ch'eo son con le core così franca como eo fui mai», et questo a tucti nui cie pare / più credibile." from lines 7-11 in n. 54, busta 1081, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, *Affari in Rimini*. This passage is also transcribed in Falcioni, 607. The letter is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 607–8. For a transcription of this letter see below "Letter 3" in Appendix 02, 340.

intermediaries, ambassadors and relatives to send both private and secret letters, and often tended to keep compromising information for oral reports, as implied by Battista and by Cleophe herself when they use periphrases such as ‘for reasons you [the receiver of the letter] know’ or ‘because I know that you would have been particularly informed about all matters by Messer Antonio’. They would have needed to use different levels of communication to protect themselves and to avoid disclosing details that might have had implications for the persons mentioned or addressed in the letters.

Battista’s rhetorical construction is of particular significance. To inform Paola of the wellbeing of Cleophe she needed to let her know that she had converted to Orthodoxy – probably a route to integration at Orthodox court in Mystras – but in doing so she does not want to expose her sister in law to the risk of retaliation from the papacy, whose emissaries might have had access to letters exchanged between the Catholic archbishopric in Patras and the Italian court of Pesaro, where Battista was based. Hence Battista makes sure to also report that Cleophe has faked the conversion and that she is still faithful to her original religious creed.

Another passage of the letter by Battista provides further insight into Cleophe’s life and role at court especially on details regarding the marital arrangements between Cleophe and her husband, Theodore II Palaiologos. While reporting what Iacomo de Santo Agnolo heard from Cleophe, Battista wrote ‘She [Cleophe] in appearance is in good will, since her husband does not have any suspicions of her and every man can freely talk to her. The despot seems to have promised her to live with her for six years and not longer, while he now lives observing chastity and abstinence, never

eating meat'.⁶² Cleophe was probably living a secluded life, able to receive embassies, but separated from her husband, who, because of his choice to practice chastity, was probably not residing with her until at least the early months of 1427, when Battista wrote to her sister-in-law Paola, and when things started to change due to Cleophe's pretended conversion. The situation is further complicated in May 1428, when Theodore once again decides to enter monastic life, corresponding to the attempted conquest of Patras in July 1428 by his brothers John VIII, Constantine, and Thomas. Theodore changes his mind later that year, before October 1428.⁶³

Since the beginning of her life in Mystras, during the summer of 1420 when she arrived from Rimini, Cleophe was probably subject to a set of rules linked to her status.⁶⁴ She had to conform to the standards of public and diplomatic interactions while holding on to her Catholic faith in order to be granted the help and support of the papacy. The latter was ostensibly acting on her behalf through the archbishopric of Patras and the Republic of Venice. For example, we know, based on an official decision of the Venetian Senate on 9 June 1428, that in response to the deteriorating situation in Morea with the Palaiologoi, Pandolfo Malatesti, Archbishop and Lord of Patras, requested that the Venetian Senate actively participate in the defence of his sister. Pandolfo's request was received favourably by the Senate that agreed Venice 'will do as much it will be for us possible toward the well-being and the peace of his

⁶² "Ella in aparentia sta de bonna voglia, per tale modo ch'el marido non mostra / havere più suspect de lei et omne homo gli pò liberamente parlare. El dispoto pare / che gli abia promesso habitare con lei sei anni et non più, et vive in observantio de sua / castità et astinentia, non mangiando mai carne" from lines 11-13 in in n. 54, busta 1081, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, Affari in Rimini. This passage is also transcribed in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607. The translation is mine. The letter by Battista da Montefeltro is at the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, Affari in Rimini, busta 1081, n. 54. It is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 607-8. For a transcription of this letter see below "Letter 3" in Appendix 02, 340.

⁶³ Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XVI.2-4, 36-9.

⁶⁴ For a discussion on general court standards for public appearances of female members of the Byzantine court see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 237, 267, 321, 353, 364, 382, 436.

[Pandolfo's] illustrious sister'⁶⁵ on the basis that Pandolfo was both a member of the Malatesti family and an archbishop of the Church. But even though such important institutions supported her, before the conversion to Orthodoxy, she appears to have been almost held apart from the despot's court, to the point that she was not just residing away from the despot, not unusual per se, but was kept segregated because the despot was "suspicious".⁶⁶

We do not have material evidence of this segregation. For instance, we do not know if she was residing in a separate section of the despot's palace in Mystras and we do not know how many accompanied her, but she definitely had a small group of courtiers.⁶⁷ Her court was allowed to use a private chapel, and was entitled to be accompanied by a minister, probably a private confessor or a priest, for her to receive the Holy Communion and to confess. In principle Cleophe and her court were even allowed to maintain her Italian customs. In an *argyrobull* signed on 29 May 1419, before the wedding took place, Despot Theodore II Palaiologos agreed to allow Cleophe to keep 'her Italian customs', '*mores suos ytallicos*'.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ "pro bono et quiete illustris sororis sue operabimus, quantum erit nobis possibile" in c. 153, Cancelleria Segreta Reg. X 1426-1428, ASVn. This passage is transcribed in Sathas, *Μνημεία Ελληνικής ιστορίας. Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au moyen âge*, 188 n. 119.

⁶⁶ The letter by Battista da Montefeltro is at the ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, Affari in Rimini, busta 1081, n. 54. It is published in the documentary appendix in Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti moglie di Teodoro II Paleologo', 607–8. For a transcription of this letter see below "Letter 3" in Appendix 02, 340. See passage from Battista's letter translated above at page 170. See above also page 170 n. 62.

⁶⁷ See Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo', 522 and 522 n. 4.

⁶⁸ Theodore II Palaiologos on 29 May 1419 wrote to his future wife, and promises 'Cupientes serenissimam dominam, carissimam consortem / nostrum futuram, dominam Cleope de Malatestis, [...] [l. 10] promittimus ipsam dominam, iuxta nutum / et placitum eius, in consueta devotione sua circa divinum / cultum, et aliis omnibus que suam respiciant conscientiam / manere et conservare permittere; et mores et cerimonias / omnes Romanae Ecclesie in quibus educate est, pro se et / suis omnibus consentire quod teneat et conservet; et capel-/lanum habeat, qui sibi et suis, secundum Romanam Eccle-/siam, continuo in divinis et spiritualibus omnibus celebret / et ministet, et ipsam vel suos ab eisdem non distrahere / aut querere, remove, directe vel indirecte. Et non tantum / in spiritualibus, sed in temporalibus quoque contenti erimus, / quod rictus et mores suos ytallicos, secundum quod affe-/ctare dicitur, teneat et conservet', in c. n. 130, *Diplomatico, Urbino, Spoglio n.*

It is important to note that Cleophe's decision to keep the Catholic faith was not a free choice. Two letters by Pope Martin V, without date, one for Theodore II and one for Cleophe clearly reminded both of the consequences of Cleophe's conversion to Orthodoxy. In the letter to Cleophe, Martin V clearly states 'We [the pope] are afraid for your safety that you are not to get into the habit of daily conversation with that rite of the Eastern Church in virtue of your saintly obedience under the threat of excommunication [...]'.⁶⁹

It is also important to note that this letter, along with the one sent to Theodore II, was brought to Mystras by Luca di Offida, a monk of the Hermits of Saint Augustine, who was not only a trusted man of Pope Martin V but also a professor of theology.⁷⁰

7, *Cartapecore laiche*, Archivio di Stato di Firenze [AsFi]. The *argyrobull* by Theodore II is transcribed in Joseph Müller, ed., *Documenti sulle relazioni delle città toscane coll'Oriente cristiano e coi Turchi fino all'anno MDXXXI*, Documenti degli archivi toscani (Firenze: Cellinie, 1879), 150 doc. n. CII; Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, IV, 102; Giovanni Murano, ed., *Colligate fragmenta: spoglio di documenti attenenti ai conti di Montefeltro e duchi di Urbino, a persone ed enti estranei allo Stato e agli interessi di quei signori dal 1001 al 1526 conservati nel Fondo Ducato di Urbino all'Archivio di Stato di Firenze* (Urbino: Accademia Raffaello, 2003), 183-4. The *argyrobull* is discussed in Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane', in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, ed. Anna Falcioni, vol. II (Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005), 955-68, esp. 960. On this *argyrobull* see Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo', 522 n. 4. In relation to this *argyrobull* Theodore II also wrote a second *argyrobull* to Mastino de' Cattanei on 19 June 1419. In the document Theodore II granted to de' Cattanei the title of Count of Sparta after serving the despot for arranging the wedding between he and Cleophe. This document was part of the family archive of Mrs Dina Alberti, widow of Mr Lilloni from Empoli. The 19 June 1419 *argyrobull* is published in Vitalien Laurent, 'Un argyrobulle inédit du despote de Morée Théodore Paléologue en faveur de Mastino de Cattanei, gentilhomme toscan', *Revue des études byzantines* 21, no. 1 (1963): 208-20. In relation to the concessions given to Cleophe by Theodore II Laurent writes 'La princesse aurait une chapelle où elle pourrait pratiquer librement sa religion suivant le rite de l'Église catholique; elle ne fréquenterait les offices orthodoxes qu'exceptionnellement dans des circonstances déterminées; elle garderait en milieu grec les us et coutumes de son pays et, en cas de décès du despote, pourrait librement y revenir auprès des siens', see Laurent, esp. 213.

⁶⁹ "[...] formidamus, ne propter quotidianam conversationem cum illis ritui orientalis Ecclesiae assuescas et devies a catholicae fidei documentis, [...], tibi in virtute sanctae oboedientiae et sub excommunicationis poena [...]". The letter by Martin V to Cleophe Malatesti is found in the Codex Barberini Lat. 878, cc. 229-230. For the full transcription of the letter see Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, vol. 1, 301-2. The letter is discussed in Ronchey, 'Malatesta - Paleologhi: un'alleanza dinastica per rifondare Bisanzio nel quindicesimo secolo', esp. 522 and 522 n. 7.

⁷⁰ Eugenio Cecconi, *Studi storici sul Concilio di Firenze: con documenti inediti o nuovamente dati alla luce sui manoscritti di Firenze e di Roma* (Firenze: Tip. dell'insegna di S. Antonino, 1869), 30-1.

This fact is important if read in relation to the kind of male visitors Cleophe was allowed to have at court. Luca di Offida, both a monk and a theologian, was someone who could not only meet the wife of the despot in private but was also an informed observer capable of providing an assessment of Cleophe's religious conduct and environment to the pope. Theological matters may have been only one element of concern for the papacy. Providing Cleophe with suitable religious services as well as religious spaces could have been a way for the pope to allow her to meet his emissaries in private in order to provide useful information regarding the political and religious debates taking place between Italian and Byzantine courts. However, we do not have evidence supporting this hypothesis.

The two letters do not bear dates but clearly anticipate the preoccupation the pope had at a time when Cleophe was still kept in segregation at court. Eugenio Cecconi, who believes the letters were sent after the death of Manuel II Palaiologos, suggested 21 July 1426 as *terminus post quem* for the two letters.⁷¹ If the letters were brought to Mystras before Cleophe wrote her first letter to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga, a connection can be suggested between the calligraphy used in the first letter by Cleophe as described above and the presence of the Augustinian monk. If the letters were sent later, they might have been the Papal response to the requests for intervention by Cleophe's sister Paola and sister-in-law Battista da Montefeltro. In both cases the two papal letters are significant as they are indices of a complex chain of agencies, which reflect papal interests towards the difficulties Cleophe was experiencing in Mystras, the diplomatic network that activated to protect Cleophe,

⁷¹ On the hypothesis regarding the post 21 July 1426 for the dating of the two letters by Martin V see Cecconi, 30-1.

and the significant role of a *quasi-ambassador* that the Malatesti had within the Byzantine court.

The subsequent letters of 1428 appear to have been written by Cleophe herself, without the help of a scribe, as the diplomatic style of the first letter is gone (Fig. 149, Fig. 151 - Fig. 153, Fig. 154).⁷² This is evident when comparing the signature on the first letter with the last two letters Cleophe sent (Fig. 163, Fig. 164, Fig. 165). In these, she reiterates her unhappiness with her condition at court. Emblematically, in the last one she wrote – [Letter 6] – to her sister Paola, on 18 July 1428, signing herself ‘Your sister unfortunate Cleofe P’ (Fig. 165).⁷³ From the letters is also clear that the exchanges with Paola and her court are less frequent, and in fact Cleophe asks for more information. Between 1426 and 1428 we witness the transformation of Cleophe’s status: from her role as an isolated Catholic ambassador, to that of the Orthodox ‘*vasilisa della Morea*’,⁷⁴ spouse of the despot, becoming more visible and more active at Mystras’ court (Fig. 164). This is not an easy transition, as it interferes with papal plans, one that she only makes after the sponsor of the original agreement with the papacy, Manuel II Palaiologos, died.

We find evidence of this integration in the funerary orations described in the next section.

⁷² For the Letters 4, 5 and 6 see respectively above pages 151-151 footnotes nn. 7, 8, 10. For the transcriptions of letters “4, 5 and 6” see below Appendix 02, 341-343.

⁷³ ‘La vostra sorella pocho ave[n]turata / Cleofe P’ in ASMn – AG - F. II/8 - Mantova e Paesi – b. 2391, c. 146 r, 18 July 1428. For the transcription of “Letter 6” see below Appendix 02, 343.

⁷⁴ In the letter sent on 20 March 1428 Cleophe signs herself as ‘*vasilisa della Morea*’, queen of Morea. ASMn – Archivio Gonzaga (AG) – F. II/8 – Mantova e Paesi – b. 2391, c. 144r.

III.5 Funerary orations

Cleophe's letters provide important insights into her life at court. They offer an intimate and historically relevant view of the conventions that a late Byzantine court imposed on the wife of a despot.⁷⁵ These conventions were set according to imperial standards and probably informed by Constantinopolitan traditions, especially in the context of Mystras, ruled during the late period by the Imperial family itself. The *Paleologina*, as Cleophe signs herself on her letters to her sister Paola,⁷⁶ was subject to rules that reinforced the perception of the ruling family of the Despotate as a regional authority (Fig. 163).⁷⁷ The letter also bears traces of the original wax seal, which, though now lost, still shows the imprint in relief of the Palaiologan emblem, the double-headed eagle. (Fig. 153) The emblem was most likely incised on the head of the ring as an official seal of the Despina. The ring, the dimensions of the seal, and the iconography of the double-headed eagle are very similar to those on the ring of the Serbian Queen Theodora from around 1322 (Fig. 166).⁷⁸ In the multi-faceted context of fifteenth-century Morea her authority had to be expressed through any possible court insignia such as an official Palaiologan ring.

⁷⁵ For a comment on the court conventions and the life at court of female members of the imperial court see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, esp. 19, 318, 353, 382.

⁷⁶ See the signatures on Archivio di Stato di Mantova [ASMn], Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, Mantova e Paesi, b. 2391, c. 128r-v; Ibid. b. 2390, c. 37r; Ibid. busta 1081, n. 54; Ibid. b. 2391, c. 145r-v, c. 144r-v, c. 146r-v (Fig. 163, Fig. 164, Fig. 165).

⁷⁷ In a dedicatory inscription found in the hermitage of the monastery dedicated to Hagios Ioannes Prodromos in Gortynia, Cleophe is acknowledged as a member of the imperial family along her husband Theodore and her father-in-law, the Emperor John V Palaiologos. The inscription says "in the reign of our most pious Emperors John and Maria and the most devout Despots Theodore and Kleopa and archbishop Matthew in the year 1427-1428 [Ἰωάννου καὶ Μαρίας βασιλευόντων τῶν εὐλαβεστάτων βασιλέων ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν εὐσεβῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Θεοδώρου καὶ Κλεόπας καὶ ἀρχιερέως Ματθαίου ἐν ἔτει 1427/1428]", in Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', 289.

⁷⁸ The ring was found in the Queen Theodora tomb in the Banjska Monastery, Kosovo. Queen Theodora (died 1322) was the daughter of the Bulgarian Emperor Smilac (r. 1292-98) and wife of the Serbian king Stefan Uros III Decanski (r. 1322-31) See Evans, *Byzantium*, 46 cat. n. 17.

Cleophe's adherence to Byzantine standards was also recognized in the funerary orations written for her death. The five funerary orations for Cleophe, in the form of monodies, by Georgios Gemistos Plethon, Nikephoros Cheilas, Bessarion, the brother Ioannes and Demetrios Pepagomenos, and the epitaphs by Bessarion and Theodore II Palaiologos have not yet been fully examined together as a coherent set of textual materials, and they have only recently been the subject of the interest of scholars working on the late Palaiologan textual production.⁷⁹

The five monodies praise Cleophe as the most virtuous and most morally beautiful Despina. Four of these were panegyrics composed around 1433 by four prestigious members of the court of Mystras: Plethon, Bessarion, Cheilas, and Pepagomenos. Particularly significant are the words used to celebrate Cleophe's presence at court. All of the monodies refer to her as an example of moral and religious rectitude and glorify her physical beauty as a mirror of her well-being and good deeds.

Unlike other intellectuals at court such as Bessarion and Plethon, it appears that Demetrios Pepagomenos was present at Cleophe's death in his role as a court doctor.⁸⁰ From his monody, we understand that the court had a strong concern for the dynastic continuation, and had invested in Cleophe very high expectations that she would be able to provide an heir, so much so that they refer to her as 'eye of the

⁷⁹ The three monodies by Georgios Gemistos Plethon, Nikephoros Cheilas and Demetrios Pepagomenos, along with the epitaph by Bessarion have individually been the object of different studies, with the exception of the one by Nikephoros Cheilas. The three monodies can be found in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 177-85. The epitaph by Bessarion is in Λάμπρος, 144-53. The epitaph by Bessarion is also studied in Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', 1994. Regarding Plethon's monody for Cleophe the most recent contribution can be found in Wright, 'Surprised by Time'.

⁸⁰ Schmalzbauer, 'Eine bisher unedierte Monodie auf Kleoppe Palaiologina von Demetrios Pepagomenos', 240.

dynasty’,⁸¹ and lament that with her death, nothing good will come not only from the present, but also the future. In particular, in the monody he provides indications that the court was in a festive mood, almost ready to ‘dance’,⁸² as she was pregnant, when she suddenly died.⁸³ He suggests the death was because of complications due to the pregnancy or while giving birth, thus explaining why the pain at court was so unbearable.⁸⁴ Pepagomenos also refers to how important and welcoming she was at court, and how concerned and motherly she was towards those at court and towards the poor, who she fed regularly. From the lexicon he uses we understand she was involved very practically in the management of the palace, describing how she took an interest in its functioning, from engaging with the cooks, she helped to collect the wood and lighted the fire in the kitchen, she cooked the food for the poor, and distributed it every day, she fed them without being worried about the heat of the fire, or the oppressive smoke, and she was not worried about the time necessary for pursuing the task in the kitchen.⁸⁵

This attention for domestic details is unusual in the context of the funerary orations that celebrate her. This is the only one that provides insights into the life of the *basilissa* at court.

Amongst the monodies, one is by the Neoplatonic philosopher and teacher at court Georgios Gemistos, also known as Plethon.⁸⁶ Plethon (born Constantinople ca. 1360

⁸¹ Pepagomenos, ‘ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρίᾳ ἡμῶν, τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ καὶ μακαρίτιδι βασιλίσσει κυρᾷ Κλεόπῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίνῃ’, vv.11-2, in Schmalzbauer, 224.

⁸² Ibid., v. 42, in Schmalzbauer, 225.

⁸³ Ibid., vv. 36-43, in Schmalzbauer, 225.

⁸⁴ Ibid., v. 75 in Schmalzbauer, 226.

⁸⁵ Ibid., vv.142-158 in Schmalzbauer, 227-8.

⁸⁶ Secondary literature on Georgios Gemistos Plethon includes Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*; George Gemistus Plethon and Moreno Neri, *Trattato delle virtù*, Bompiani (Milano:

– died Mystras 26 June 1452) was a scholar and intellectual who studied in Constantinople. Around 1410 he was sent to Mystras by Manuel II Palaiologos. He taught in Mystras and in Constantinople, and was granted land for his services. In 1438-39 he participated in the Council of Ferrara-Florence, where he made contact with the intellectuals who lived at those courts. In Florence he wrote a treatise *On the differences of Aristotle from Plato*, which would have a strong impact on Italian intellectuals and in particular on Cosimo de Medici. In open contrast with Plethon, Gennadios II Scholarios destroyed the most important of his treatise on law, so we have lost the most important part of his production.⁸⁷ However, amongst his surviving work, along with the funerary monody for Cleophe, we still have two works of rhetoric, one addressed to Despot Theodore II Palaiologos, and the other to Manuel II Palaiologos, which contain suggestions for a better organisation and administration of the Morea. Plethon expresses the pinnacle of the intellectual production of Mystras, and gave it international fame. Proof of Plethon's fame in the Italian courts is given by a posthumous testimony, when Sigismondo Malatesti went to Mystras during the war against the Ottomans (1463-1464) and recovered the body of Plethon, taking it to Rimini, where he is buried in the Tempio Malatestiano.⁸⁸

Bompiani, 2010); Niketas Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium: Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon* (Cambridge, UK; New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea'; Vojtěch Hladký, *The Philosophy of Gemistos Plethon: Platonism in Late Byzantium, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014). On the influence of Plethon's writings in Italy, see Marco Bertozzi, 'George Gemistos Plethon and the Myth of Ancient Paganism: From the Council of Ferrara to the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini', in *Proceedings of the International Congress on Plethon and His Time (Mystras 26-29 June 2002)* (Athens/Mystras: Niarchos, 2003), 177–85; Bertozzi, 'Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e il mito del paganesimo antico: dal Concilio di Ferrara al Tempio Malatestiano di Rimini'; Vojtěch Hladký, 'From Byzantium to Italy: "Ancient Wisdom" in Plethon and Cusanus"', in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance* (Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2014), 273–92.

⁸⁷ See Ruth Webb, 'The Nomoi of Gemistos Plethon in the Light of Plato's Laws', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989): 214–19, esp. 214–15.

⁸⁸ On the Tempio Malatestiano, Sigismondo Malatesti and Plethon, see Bertozzi, 'George Gemistos Plethon and the Myth of Ancient Paganism'; Bertozzi, 'Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e il mito del paganesimo antico: dal Concilio di Ferrara al Tempio Malatestiano di Rimini'; Shawcross, 'A New

Plethon's monody for Cleophe is a rhetorical exercise enumerating the virtues of the wife of the Moreote despot.⁸⁹ Plethon starts first with a brief description of her outer beauty as an emanation of her inner beauty, in a sense applying his studies on Plato's philosophy and on virtues to the commemoration of the *basilissa*. According to Plethon's words Cleophe 'exhibited, along the beauty of her body, which was radiant, an even more radiant and holy quality of soul, and showed that her body was an image of the beauty of her soul'.⁹⁰ Similar rhetorical and philosophical implications regarding the understanding of Cleophe's physical beauty can be detected in other monodies. In particular where Plethon chooses words such as *εἰδωλόν/eidolon*, image of the soul,⁹¹ Cheilas while referring to Cleophe's corporeal beauty writes 'oh beautiful statue of the nature, oh pillar of all the graces and virtues' using the word *ἄγαλμα/agalma*, statue of the nature.⁹² Both Plethon and Cheilas write about her beauty as something that is physical, real, like a physical image or a statue, but that is linked to an emanation of a principle that goes beyond human's activity like the soul, nature or theological virtues. This similar approach in addressing her physical beauty is an index of the interest for the study of Plato that these intellectuals shared at the court of Mystras.⁹³

Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea'; Hladký, 'From Byzantium to Italy: "Ancient Wisdom" in Plethon and Cusanus'.

⁸⁹ Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, esp. 113-5.

⁹⁰ Plethon writes "Ἡ δέ, πρὸς τῷ τοῦ σώματος κάλλει, λαμπρῷ ὄντι, πολὺ ἔτι λαμπρότερόν τε καὶ θειότερον τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀντεπιδεδειγμένη, εἰδωλὸν τι τοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς κάλλος τὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπέφαινε", in Plethon, 'ἐπὶ τῇ ἀοιδίῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ', v. 17 and vv. 1-2 in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 165-6.

⁹¹ Plethon, 'ἐπὶ τῇ ἀοιδίῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ', v. 2 in Λάμπρος, IV:166.

⁹² Cheilas refers to Cleophe as 'ὃ καλὸν τῆς φύσεως ἄγαλμα, ὃ στήλη πασῶν χαρίτων καὶ ἀρετῶν', in Cheilas, 'ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρίᾳ ἡμῶν, τῇ ἀοιδίῳ καὶ μαχαρίτιδι βασιλίσση Κλεόπῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίῳ', vv. 28-9 in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 145.

⁹³ Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium*, esp. 119-24.

In praising the wife of the despot, Plethon, who addresses her as *Βασιλίδι/Basilidi*, queen, describes her as possessing all the most relevant virtues not just for a woman but, more importantly, virtues appropriate of someone whose status linked to the despot placed her above gender definitions, since she was able to converse on an equal status with other members of Plethon's circle.⁹⁴

The idea of Cleophe being equal amongst the intellectual elites of Mystras is also mirrored by Cheilas' monody, where he refers to her as someone who, while being 'amongst women, she possessed a manlike intelligence'.⁹⁵ While often a trope, this is an indication of the way in which Cleophe was perceived at court, a perception that finds correspondence also in Plethon's monody.

Plethon writes that Cleophe had the virtues of 'modesty, practical wisdom, temperance, gentleness, excellence, piety, devotion, nobility'⁹⁶ and, in the text, comments on each of these virtues. Plethon also discusses some of these virtues in his *Treaty on virtues*, which is transcribed in the same section of codex *Mut. Gr. 144* that contains the treaty *On virtues and vices* by Pseudo-Aristotle (Fig. 167).⁹⁷ In his funerary oration Plethon, by describing how Cleophe complied with these virtues, elevates Cleophe to the moral, ethical, civic and religious standards that are proper to a Byzantine ruler. In particular, while commenting on the virtue of σωφροσύνη

⁹⁴ Plethon, 'ἐπὶ τῇ αἰοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ', vv. 12-6 and v. 1 in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, IV:164-65.

⁹⁵ Cheilas, 'ἐπὶ τῇ θειοτάτῃ καὶ εὐσεβεῖ κυρίᾳ ἡμῶν, τῇ αἰοιδίμῳ καὶ μαχαρίτιδι βασιλίσσῃ Κλεόπῃ τῇ Παλαιολογίνα', vv. 20-6 in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 146.

⁹⁶ Plethon, 'ἐπὶ τῇ αἰοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ', vv. 3-9 in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, IV:166. These are standard imperial female virtues. For a survey on the use of virtues in the literary portraits in Byzantium see Peter Hatlie, 'Images of Motherhood and Self in Byzantine Literature', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 41-57.

⁹⁷ The two treaties are in *Mut. Gr. 144* ff. 155r - 159v. For a critical edition of Plethon text see Gemistus Plethon and Neri, *Trattato delle virtù*. For a diagram regarding Plethon's and Pseudo-Aristotle's organization of virtues see *Mut. Gr. 144*, fol 158r - Biblioteca Estense Modena.

(*sophrosyne*), temperance, Plethon provides us an insight that gives further proof of the kind of situation that Cleophe managed to cope with while at court in Mystras, and that she had complained about to her Italian relatives.

Plethon praises Cleophe's temperance in moving out of the 'softness and relaxation of Italy, to learn the severity and modesty of our morals, so she was second to none of the women of our house'.⁹⁸ While indirectly exalting the more decorous living of the Greeks, Plethon gives praise to the deceased Cleophe not just for being a model of virtue, but also for having embodied the ideal standards of the wife of a despot in the Palaiologan court. She is not just merely praised; she is praised for having assumed the role she was expected to perform after converting to Orthodoxy, as we know from the letter by Battista da Montefeltro.⁹⁹ By comparing Battista's words with Plethon's, it is possible to detect the tension and the complexity of Cleophe's adaptation to Byzantine court standards.

The complex political, social and cultural environment of the late Byzantine court in Mystras was one which the Italian *basilissa* found difficult and hostile, but which she managed to negotiate to the point of excellence, as stated in her eulogies, not only for her status but also for her contributions to the social, cultural and political life at court.

⁹⁸ 'Σωφροσύνης δ' ἐκεῖνο μέγα τεκμήριον, ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἰταλικῆς ἀνέσεώς τε καὶ ῥαστώνης ἐπὶ τὸ κατεσταλμένον τε καὶ κόσμιον τοῦ ἡμετέρου τρόπου μεταβολὴ ἀκριβεστάτη, ὥς μηδ' ἂν μιᾷ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν γυναικῶν ὑπερβολὴν λιπεῖν', in Plethon, 'ἐπὶ τῇ ἀοιδίμῳ βασιλίδι Κλεόπῃ', vv. 3-6, in Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 167.

⁹⁹ See here above 166-168.

III.6 Ciriaco d'Ancona and the elephant on the page

The codex *Mut. Gr. 144* gathers heterogeneous materials and has been compiled in the fashion of a miscellaneous collection of texts, copied during a long chronology, in some cases with significant temporal distance between the time one text was copied and another.¹⁰⁰ The handwritings in the codex are twelve and the collection of the different texts was meant to be used by scholars belonging to the same cultural group who might have inspired the actual composition of the text.¹⁰¹ From f. 130r of the codex it is possible to deduce that the Codex was originally written and assembled in Mystras between the early forties and the early fifties of the fifteenth century (Fig. 168).¹⁰²

This is one of those particular codices that are conceived and assembled as an on-going process, as a *hausbuch*, a book tailored to the interests of the owner, Demetrios Raul Kabakes, whose name also appears on f. 130r (Table 9).¹⁰³ The twelve handwritings in the codex indicate that the codex was used by a group of people. The

¹⁰⁰ For a general description of the codex *Mutiniensis Graecus 144*, see Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', 124-5. For a detailed description of the contents of the codex, see Vittorio Puntoni, *Indice dei codici greci della Biblioteca estense di Modena* (Firenze: Fratelli Bencini, 1896), 475-8; then reprinted in Christa Samberger, *Catalogi codicum Graecorum qui in minoribus bibliothecis Italicis asservantur: in duo volumina collati et novissimis additamentis aucti* (Lipsiae: Zentral-Antiquariat, 1965), vol. I. For a recent study on the codex, see De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144'.

¹⁰¹ On the palaeography, the dating and the collection of different texts in the codex, see De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144', eps. 245-7.

¹⁰² On the folio 130r. in red ink it is possible to read:

“+ ὁ χ(ριστὸς) αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ (καὶ) τέλος + / + Ἐπληρώθη(η) ὁ παρ(ὸν) [!] λόγος διὰ χειρὸς(ς) ἐμοῦ νοταρίου τῆς ἀγίω(τ)α(ς) μ(η)τροπόλε / ως Λακεδαιμονί(ας), Νικολάου τοῦ Λεμενίτι · μηνῖ / ιουλλίω ιν(διχτιῶνος) ε-η´ [!] · ἔτ(ους) ,ς-ῶ·ῶ μ-ῶ [!]θ´ [-θ´corr. ex -α´ ead. manus]: · ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος ἐστὶν κυρ(οῦ) Δημητρίου καὶ αὐ(θ)έντ(ου) μου Ῥαοῦλλ τοῦ Καβάκη: /+ χωρικός δέ ἐστιν εἰς τὸ γράφειν, καὶ διὰ τὸν κ(ύριον) εὐχεσθαι / καὶ μὴ καταράσθαι +” The text is signed by Nicola Lemenitis, notary of the metropolitan church of Lakedaemonia, and it bears the name of Raul Kabakes. It also bears the date July 1441 indiction fifth or sixth. Scholars who studied the manuscript believes this the ante quem date for its compiling that took a period of 10 years. See De Gregorio.

¹⁰³ On the concept of the *hausbücher* see Herbert Hunger, *Schreiben und Lesen in Byzanz: die byzantinische Buchkultur*, Beck's archäologische Bibliothek (München: C. H. Beck, 1989), 74-5, 110. Also on the Cod. Mut. Gr. 144 see De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144'.

codex contains thirty extracts and sections of letters by various authors amongst whom features Georgios Gemistos Plethon.¹⁰⁴ The codex is also known for containing a drawing by Ciriaco di Filippo de' Pizzicolti, or Ciriaco d'Ancona.¹⁰⁵

Ciriaco di Filippo de' Pizzicolti, also known as Ciriaco d'Ancona (Ancona 1391 – Cremona ca. 1455), was emblematic of the cultural debates taking place at Italian courts and at the Court of Mystras in the first half of the fifteenth century. He was born into a patrician mercantile family of Ancona. After his father's death in 1397, Ciriaco was raised by his mother Masiella Selvatico, from Venice, and was educated and trained to be a businessman. Ciriaco started to travel along with his maternal uncle to Venice on business at an early age and soon in life became an accomplished and trusted trader for Venetian mercantile enterprises trading all around the eastern Mediterranean. Thanks to his ability in managing trade and finances, and for his Venetian connections, around the age of thirty Ciriaco was appointed financial advisor to the papal governor of the city of Ancona, Cardinal Gabriele Condulmer, the future Pope Eugenius IV (born in Venice, 1383 – died in Rome, 23 February 1447). Later in life, Ciriaco acted as papal ambassador for Eugenius IV while

¹⁰⁴ The codex Mut. gr. 144 collects texts that are also found in other codices linked to Mystras. These are the codices that were compiled by Plethon himself such as the Marc. gr. 379, Marc. gr. 406 and Marc. gr. 517 studied by Aubrey Diller, 'The Autographs of Georgius Gemistus Pletho', *Scriptorium* 10, no. 1 (1956): 27–41. Other codices with similar texts to the Mut. Gr. 144 are the Monac. gr. 490, Monac. gr. 495, Par. gr. 963, Par. gr. 1739, Par. Mazarine 4456 (1228), Leid. Periz. F 6, Vat. Pal. gr. 256 Gerolamini XXII. These codices contain the *Hexabiblos* by Constantine Harmenopoulos, *De anima mundi* by Timaeus of Locri, *De mundo* and *De virtutibus* by Plato, *Ad Demonium* by Isocrates, *De calumnia* by Lucian, and Greek translations of sections of the *Naturali Historia* by Plinio and of the *Somnium Scipionis* by Cicero. They also contain the *Μαγικά Λόγια τῶν Ζωροάστρου μάγον* with a comment by Plethon. On these different manuscripts and on the texts these manuscript contains, see De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144', esp. 249-54 and 249-54 nn. 11-29.

¹⁰⁵ The drawing has been recognized by Anna Pontani, see Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', 124 n. 10. On the drawing also see De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144', 247-8 and 247-8 nn. 8-10. On Ciriaco d'Ancona and the interaction with the intellectuals in Mystras, see above ch. III.6 - Ciriaco d'Ancona and the elephant on the page, esp. 182-193.

traveling through the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires between 1435-43 and 1447-49.¹⁰⁶

During these trips Ciriaco began collecting, documenting and surveying antiquities. His findings and his surveys were included in diaries he shared with scholars and artists, whom he met through his connections with the papacy and with Italian and Byzantine aristocrats. Based on primary sources and historical accounts, Ciriaco's life can be divided into three parts: the first, from 1391 to 1435, is documented by a few letters and by the *Vita Kiriaci Anconitani* by Francesco Scalamonti;¹⁰⁷ the second, from 1435 to 1443, is recorded by letters and by Ciriaco's own diaries that were published in the seventeenth and eighteenth century from a now lost manuscript;¹⁰⁸ and a third part, from 1443 to his death in 1452, is known through his diaries and a series of letters he sent to scholars and friends.¹⁰⁹ All these documents report Ciriaco's travels and research activities across 60 years. Ciriaco sailed the coasts of Morea several times and visited its capital, Mystras, both in 1436-7 and in 1447-8 (Fig. 170A-C).¹¹⁰ We know from his diaries that during visits to Mystras

¹⁰⁶ On Ciriaco d'Ancona life, travels and scholar interests, see Edward W. Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens* (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1960); Jean Colin, *Cyriaque d'Ancône: le voyageur, le marchand, l'humaniste* (Paris: Maloine, 1981); Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)'; Francesco Scalamonti, Charles Mitchell, and Edward W. Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1996); Gianfranco Paci and Sergio Sconocchia, *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'umanesimo: atti del convegno internazionale di studio: Ancona, 6-9 febbraio 1992* (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 1998); d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*; Ciriaco d'Ancona, Edward W. Bodnar, and Clive Foss, *Life and Early Travels* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2015); Michael Chatzidakis, *Ciriaco d'Ancona und die Entdeckung Griechenlands im 15 Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016).

¹⁰⁷ The *Vita* was written by Francesco Scalamonti, a close friend of Ciriaco, who, around the thirties of the fifteenth century, transcribed Ciriaco's own accounts of the early part of his life. This text was then transcribed by Felice Feliciano at fols. 22 r – 108 r of the codex MS 2, A/1, in the Biblioteca Capitolare, Treviso. For an introduction to the codex and to Scalamonti's accounts on the early part of Ciriaco's life, see Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*, 1-24.

¹⁰⁸ See d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvrniam*.

¹⁰⁹ See d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*.

¹¹⁰ See, for the first trip, d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvrniam*, XXXVII-XXXVIII. See also in general for the second trip Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona*

Ciriaco met members of the imperial family — Theodore II, Demetrios and Thomas Palaiologos — as well as scholars such as Georgios Gemistos Plethon and the intellectuals surrounding him.

Mut. Gr. 144 served as a collection of exempla for erudite discussions amongst the scholars that gravitated around Plethon, including Kabakes.¹¹¹ It is important to note that, because of the significant number of copyists involved in its production, the manuscript is itself a writing workshop giving a glimpse into the palaeographic tradition of the capital city of Morea, Mystras, during the apex of its cultural production. It is a collection of philosophical and natural history treatises. Even though, during the same period, the Peloponnese was highly provincial in terms of demand and production of manuscripts, the city of Mystras was able to meet the needs of a highly developed, educated audience, interested not only in the holy scriptures, but also in other texts.¹¹²

The meetings between Ciriaco, Plethon, and his students, as reported by Ciriaco himself in his diaries,¹¹³ find a meaningful visual trace on folio 179v of the *Mut. Gr. 144* (Fig. 169). There are three notable elements on the folio 179v of the codex (Table 10):

- 1- A drawing of an elephant portrayed while grazing;

and Athens; Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*; d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*; d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Life and Early Travels*.

¹¹¹ De Gregorio, 'Attività scrittoria a Mistrà nell'ultima età Paleologa: il caso del Cod. Mut. Gr. 144', 249.

¹¹² For a list of manuscripts compiled and related to Mystras see Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, vol. II, 315-20.

¹¹³ On Ciriaco's travels to the Peloponnese, see above. On Ciriaco d'Ancona see here above footnotes nn. 106-2.

2- A sentence with the attribution of the drawing to Ciriaco d'Ancona, in the hand writing of Kabakes himself;¹¹⁴

3- A motto written by Ciriaco d'Ancona himself.¹¹⁵

These three elements together tell an important story that reveals how someone like Ciriaco d'Ancona can be seen as emblematic of the cultural debates taking place at the court of Mystras in the first half of the fifteenth century, and a participant in a complex web of agencies to which also Cleophe belongs.

But why was Ciriaco specifically asked to illustrate the folio? Why was recording him as the author important? Byzantine illustrations usually serve a purpose and are rarely attributed. What was special about this illustration? To answer these questions we first have to answer a more basic question. Why the elephant?

Four texts in the codex hold the key to the answer.¹¹⁶ They are:

- the *Treaty on Virtues* by Plethon [ff. 155-7];
- the *Treaty of Virtues*, by the Pseudo-Aristotle [ff. 158-9] (Fig. 167);
- a Greek translation of the *Somnium Scipionis* by Cicero [ff. 167-9] (Fig. 171);
- one letter written to Kabakes, by Gennadios Scholarios [f. 179r].

These four texts are linked by their direct contribution to the fifteenth-century debate on human virtues. Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, translated in Greek at ff. 167-9 in the *Mut. Gr. 144*, σκεπτιῶνος ὄντιος, the sixth book of *De Re Publica*, narrates of the

¹¹⁴ This is an attribution by Anna Pontani. See Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', 124 n. 10.

¹¹⁵ The identification of the handwriting of the motto has been done through a comparison with the Greek cursive writing on top of the Ciriaco's autograph Greek alphabet at f. 1 of the codex Harley MS 5693, British Library, London. See Pontani, 124 n. 9.

¹¹⁶ Pontani, *Indice dei codici greci della Biblioteca estense di Modena*, 475-8.

dream of Scipio Aemilianus.¹¹⁷ He dreams of his ancestor Scipio Africanus, who while foretelling his future, discusses issues such as the immortality of the soul, the heavens and, critically, the virtues of great men. Scipio Africanus himself, in Latin literature, is a model of virtues, in particular of *Temperantia* and *Fortitudo* – σωφροσύνη, *sophrosyne* and ἀνδρεία, *andreia* – two of four cardinal virtues that are also discussed in the Pseudo-Aristotle, and in the Περὶ ἀρετῶν, *Treaty on Virtues*, by Plethon.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, Scipio was of interest to many Italian humanists debating on the superiority of the virtues of Caesar over Scipio. The debate informed the controversy between Poggio Bracciolini and Guarino Veronese and it made use of Latin authors such as Suetonius and Livy.¹¹⁸ In book XXVI chapter 50 of the *History of Rome* by Livy it is possible to identify an extensive account of Scipio's *sophrosyne*. After the conquest of New Carthage, Scipio is given a young beautiful slave woman as part of the loot. When he discovers the girl is promised to a local aristocrat, Allucius, Scipio renounces his rights on the slave, thus preserving the young girl's honour, allowing the couple to marry, and returning the bride's dowry.

This episode became well known amongst Italian humanists: Machiavelli referred to it as an example of diplomacy to convert subdued enemies into friends.¹¹⁹ Thus the

¹¹⁷ According to Ambrogio Traversari, in a letter to Niccolò Niccoli, Ciriaco was at some point in possession of an onyx portraying Scipio Aemilianus. See Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*, 156 n. 133.

¹¹⁸ On the controversy between Poggio and Guarino, see Davide Canfora, *La controversia di Poggio Bracciolini e Guarino Veronese su Cesare e Scipione* (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 2001), esp. 91-102.

¹¹⁹ At folii 112v – 114v and 156v-157v Ciriaco transcribed Livy's passages on Scipio, particularly Scipio's response to Hannibal in book XXX chapter 3. See Douglas J. Stewart, 'Rome, Venice,

historical figure of Scipio became an allegory of σωφροσύνη, *sophrosyne/temperantia* [temperance] and ἀνδρεία, *andreia/fortitudo* [fortitude].

Ciriaco – who was, according to Sergio Sconocchia, one of the first to study Livy in the fifteenth century – must have known this story. In manuscript *Ottoboniensis Latinus 1586*, Ciriaco himself transcribed other passages from Livy.¹²⁰

The iconographic tradition associated with Scipio is linked to the image of an elephant, an African elephant, a deviation from the more traditional personification of the *Regio Africae* as a goddess wearing an elephant skin on her head (Fig. 172A-B).¹²¹ This visual association with the African Elephant can be seen in a denarius struck by Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, a descendant of Scipio. The denarius has an elephant on the reverse (Fig. 173A-B).¹²² This iconography can also be linked to the adoptive gens of Quintus Scipio, the Caecilius Metellus, as shown in another denarius that has on the obverse a depiction of Pietas and on the reverse an African elephant (Fig. 174A-B).¹²³

Mantua, London: Form and Meaning in the “Solomonic” Column, from Veronese to George Vertue’, *The British Art Journal* 8, no. 3 (2007): 15–23, esp. 21.

¹²⁰ See Sergio Sconocchia, ‘Ciriaco e i prosatori latini’, in *Ciriaco d’Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell’umanesimo : atti del convegno internazionale di studio : Ancona, 6-9 febbraio 1992*, 1998, 307–25, esp. 310–3.

¹²¹ For an example of a silver denarius issued by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio see ‘Silver Denarius Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, American Numismatic Society: RRC 461/1. 1944.100.3309’, accessed 13 July 2016, <http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.3309>.

¹²² For an example of this kind of silver denarius by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio see ‘Silver Denarius Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, American Numismatic Society: RRC 459/1. 1944.100.3305’, accessed 13 July 2016, <http://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.3305>.

¹²³ For an example of this kind of silver denarius issued by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, see ‘Silver Denarius Issuer Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius 81 BCE American Numismatic Society RRC 374/1. 1957.172.27’, accessed 13 July 2016, <http://numismatics.org/collection/1957.172.27>. On Ciriaco’s coins collection, see Scalamenti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*, 129 n. 89.

If the image of the elephant can be linked to Scipio Africanus, the motto, just above it, provides further suggestive evidence of this association (Fig. 169; Table 10).

Scholars believe the motto on the folio 179v to be of Ciriaco's own hand. It reads:

ἔρως οὐδεὶς εἰς ἄγνωστον φέρετε[!]¹²⁴

If the last ε is the phonetic transcription of αι, as Pontani suggests,¹²⁵ then the inscription translates as: 'No love is offered to an unknown person', in other words love cannot be given to someone who is unknown, foreign.

This motto might indeed refer to Scipio's story as told by Livy. Because of his σωφροσύνη, *sophrosyne/temperantia* [temperance] and ἀνδρεία, *andreia/fortitudo* [fortitude], he knew he could not find true and honest love in the young captive woman, and while showing respect for the love she had for her promised Allucius, he ruled for the woman to be free and at the same time demonstrated to be a just, controlled and victorious ruler. Livy's account was known by Ciriaco. It is possible that Ciriaco suggested the elephant to Kabakes as a visual association to Scipio and to Scipio's *sophrosyne/temperantia*.

Not only did Ciriaco know Livy, he also had seen elephants. Ciriaco visited Mystras twice, and given that the codex bears 1441 as the earliest date for its assemblage, Ciriaco must have drawn on it during his last visit in the late forties. By then Ciriaco had travelled twice to Egypt where he had seen elephants in nature, as he reported in two letters, one to his old friend, Pope Eugenius IV, dated 1441, and another to Filippo Maria Visconti dated January 1443 (Fig. 175A-B). He describes elephants

¹²⁴ I would like to thank Dr Ruth Macrides for helping with the translation of this motto into English. The translation was finalised based on a series of email exchanged between 4 and 9 March 2015.

¹²⁵ Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', 124.

and giraffes and illustrates the letters with drawings of both. The original letters are now lost but copies survive.¹²⁶

It is important to notice that Ciriaco's depiction of the elephant is far from generic (Fig. 176). Given its relative height and the short length of its tusks, it is likely a male bull, shown grazing on small shrubs. The grazing elephant is another reference to Temperance, as mentioned in the episode of the Syrian elephant in Plutarch's *Moralia*, a text with which Ciriaco was familiar. In Plutarch's *Moralia* the question 'Which are the most crafty, water animals or those creature that breed upon the Land' is answered with an account of a Syrian elephant, praised for its controlled and calculated eating manners. Ciriaco must have been familiar with this particular story since the *Moralia* by Plutarch were copied in *Vat. Gr. 1309*, one of the few manuscripts that was part of Ciriaco's personal library. Ciriaco's ownership of this codex is documented and we know that Ciriaco bought the manuscript at Athos on 23 November 1444.¹²⁷

The link of the virtue of *sophrosyne/temperantia* to the elephant can also be retrospectively tested by considering another famous elephant image. Around the time that Ciriaco was drawing his elephant in Mystras, a very similar iconography was employed on the reverse of a medal linked to Sigismondo Malatesti from

¹²⁶ On these letters, see Phyllis Williams Lehmann, *Cyriacus of Ancona's Egyptian Visit and Its Reflections in Gentile Bellini and Hieronymus Bosch* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin, 1977), 10-1.

¹²⁷ See Pontani, 'I Graeca di Ciriaco d'Ancona (Con due disegni autografi inediti e una notizia su Cristoforo da Rieti)', 122-3. Also on Ciriaco's visit to Mt Athos and the purchase of the manuscript see Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*, 66-8 n. 119.

Rimini, whose family was known to Ciriaco.¹²⁸ Ciriaco was in Rimini immediately after returning from the Peloponnese in 1449 as attested by a letter he wrote to Roberto Valturio from Ravenna mentioning his recent departure from Rimini, where at that time Matteo de Pasti (born ca. 1410 – died ca. 1467) was residing.¹²⁹

The medal by Matteo de Pasti was commissioned as a commemorative and celebratory act, hence the elephant was chosen as a way to celebrate the virtues of Isotta degli Atti (born 1432/33 – died 1474) (Fig. 177, Fig. 178).¹³⁰ On the obverse, the medal portrays Isotta, third wife of Sigismondo. On the reverse it features once again an elephant, whose proportions and setting closely recall Ciriaco's drawing in the Kabakes manuscript. Isotta was the third and last wife of Sigismondo but was engaged to him long before marrying him. She is celebrated on the medal as a virtuous woman with a chaste soul mastering the virtue of *sophrosyne/temperantia* while waiting for Sigismondo. This image of the grazing elephant should not be associated with the iconography of Fame or *Aeternitas* as suggested in previous

¹²⁸ As early as 1423 Ciriaco while traveling from Ancona to Venice, after stopping in Fano, reached Rimini from where he wrote a letter to Pietro di Liberio de Bonarellis in Ancona. The letter can be found in the MS, Vat. lat. 8750 (VL9), ff. 125 v – 128 r. It has been first published in Medardo Morici, *Lettere inedite di Ciriaco d'Ancona, 1438-1440* (Pistoia: Flori e Biagini, 1896). It has been published and translated in English in Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*, Appendix I, 166-80. In the letter, which is the earliest known work by Ciriaco, and where he 'justifies his attention to pagan authors', Ciriaco reports his first encounter with the young Sigismondo Malatesti. Ciriaco writes 'On my way to the city of Venice, I broke my journey at the ancient walls of Fano. The fostering day had already withdrawn from the sky and the sun was setting into the sea when I decided to snatch peaceful sleep beneath the chariot of the silent night. But shortly before the crested cock aroused the warming day with its waking cry, when Dawn in her saffron-colored car had not yet put the stars to flight in the shining heavens, behold a boy, distinguished in beauty and dignity, appeared to me in a dream, in Fano's very palace, it seemed, surrounded by a numerous company of notable knights and lawyers and other prominent citizens. This mere lad chanced to be presiding at the time as head of this city in the absence of his father', this 'lad' was Sigismondo Malatesti, in Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, 176.

¹²⁹ See Emil Jacobs, 'Cyriacus von Ancona und Mehemed II', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 (1929): 197–202, 198.

¹³⁰ A struck of the medal is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. On the medal and secondary sources related to it, see 'Isotta Degli Atti, 1432/1433-1474, Mistress 1446, Then Wife after 1453, of Sigismondo Malatesta [Obverse]', accessed 13 July 2016, <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.44413.html#inscription>.

literature on the medal and read in relation to the depiction of the Triumphs.¹³¹ The iconographic motif of Fame is usually rendered with a pair of marching elephants drawing a *biga* or carrying an insignia, a motif that was also well known to Matteo de Pasti (Fig. 179), so it is unlikely that he would have confused the two different iconographies for the medal of Isotta.

If the iconography of Fame with the chariot and the marching elephants was well understood in fifteenth-century Rimini, the iconography of *sophrosyne/temperantia* as the grazing elephant was equally well understood by de Pasti and by the Malatesti who employed it in several other decorative motifs in Isotta's funerary chapel inside the church of San Francesco in Rimini, the Tempio Malatestiano (Fig. 180).¹³²

The resemblance between Ciriaco's elephant and the one on Isotta's medal reflects a shared iconography of the *sophrosyne/temperantia* and *andreia/fortitudo* virtues.

This common understanding is supported by two later treatises – the *Hieroglyphica* (Basle, 1556) by Pierio Valeriano (born 1477 – died 1558),¹³³ and the *Iconologia* (1593) by Cesare Ripa,¹³⁴ – which indicate that the grazing elephant was a visual

¹³¹ Luke Syson, 'Consorts, Mistresses and Exemplary Women: The Female Medallion Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Italy', in *The Sculpted Object, 1400-1700* (Aldershot, Hants, England, 1997), 43–64, esp. 50. Also Harold Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*. (London, Printed by order of the Trustees-, 1968), 241 cat. nn. 1501-04.

¹³² On Isotta's tomb, its construction phases and its implications for the overall re-design of the Tempio Malatestiano as planned by Sigismondo Malatesti see Charles Hope, 'The Early History of the Tempio Malatestiano', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 51–154, esp. 58-60, 63, 72, 118. On the Tempio Malatestiano see below page 195 footnote n. 140.

¹³³ Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica; sive, De sacris Aegyptiorum, aliarumque gentium* (Basileae, Per Thomam Guarinum, 1556).

¹³⁴ Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia ovvero descrizione dell' Imagini universali cavate dall' antichità et da altri luoghi* Da Cesare Ripa Perugino. *Opera non meno utile, che necessaria à Poeti, Pittori, & Scultori, per rappresentare le virtù, vitij, affetti, & passioni humane* (Roma: Heredi di Gio. Gigliotti, 1593). The *Iconologia* is "an encyclopedia of symbolic meanings for virtually everything in the natural world", in Elizabeth McGrath, 'Ripa, Cesare', Grove Art Online, 12 September 2015. "the *Iconologia*. First published in Rome in 1593, it went through many editions and translations, the text being expanded and 'improved' first by Ripa himself, then still more by friends and publishers. [...] Its real impact came when it appeared with a selection of woodcuts in 1603. Proceeding systematically

representation of Temperance (Fig. 181, Fig. 182). In particular, in the second book of the *Hieroglyphica*, Pierio Valeriano points out that the iconography of the Elephant is recorded as a visual attribution for Africa as well as for σωφροσύνη, *sophrosyne/temperantia*, and the iconography of Africa is directly linked to Scipio's family, as for the coin with elephant on the reverse of the coin of Quintus Caecillius Metellus Pius Scipio (Fig. 173).¹³⁵ Scipio was a historical figure who was of interest at the court of Mystras, hence the inclusion of Cicero's σκεπίωνος ὄνιρος, the Greek translation of *Somnium Scipionis*, at ff. 167-9 in the *Mut. Gr. 144*, as well as being studied by Ciriaco,¹³⁶ and known by Basinio da Parma (born 1425 – died 1453), one of the poets active at the court of Sigismondo Malatesti.¹³⁷

III.7 Conclusions

This chapter has analysed a series of primary sources, letters and poetic compositions, related to Cleophe Malatesti during her years in Mystras. It has also identified a number of clues regarding Ciriaco's elephant drawing in the *Mut. Gr. 144*, which have been related to the exchanges between the Court of Mystras and Western courts.

As we have seen, the paper used for the letters written from Mystras by Cleophe is of Italian manufacture, as is probably the paper also used for *Mut. Gr. 144*. Ciriaco's

through more than 1000 images and nearly 700 concepts, from Abundance (a garlanded woman clad in gold with a bunch of mustard and poppies and a cornucopia) to Zeal (a man dressed as an ancient priest holding a scourge and a lamp), it describes and prescribes ways to represent allegorical figures", in McGrath.

¹³⁵ See Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*; sive, *De sacris Aegyptiorum, aliarumque gentium*, II, 17.

¹³⁶ See above page 187 footnote n. 119.

¹³⁷ Basinio da Parma '[d]uring the last years of his life he lived as a member of the court of Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini and wrote an unfinished epic, *The Hesperis*, lauding the military deeds of his master and paralleling Ennius's *Scipio* [the Roman poet Ennius (239-169 BCE) close to Scipio Africanus]. [...] Moreover, Basinio's master, Sigismondo, considered himself a descendant of Ennius's patron, Scipio, and steeped himself in Roman traditions', in Jessie Poesch, 'Ennius and Basinio of Parma', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25 (1962): 116–18, esp. 116-7.

drawing, which is on a page made of paper and not membrane parchment. Both Ciriaco and Cleophe lived between Italian courts and the court in Mystras, and both were part of the intellectual milieu of both contexts. There is no direct evidence of any contacts between Cleophe and Ciriaco in Mystras, even though it has been suggested that a meeting between the two, during a first undocumented visit to Mystras by Ciriaco, might have been the way Ciriaco introduced himself to the Malatesti's court in Rimini.¹³⁸ But even without this direct evidence, the materials discussed in this chapter at a minimum show the degree of sophistication of the exchanges between the intellectual circle in Mystras, Cleophe, Ciriaco and, through him, to other humanists in Italy.

While we do not know whether or not the elephant in *Mut. Gr. 144* and that on Isotta degli Atti's medal are directly linked – we cannot prove that the virtue of tolerance for which Isotta is praised on her medal was of the same nature of the σωφροσύνη, *sophrosyne/temperantia*, temperance for which Cleophe is praised by Plethon – it seems plausible that this evidence responds to similar intellectual debates on virtues, debates that were centred on Plethon's scholarship, which was highly regarded both at the Palaiologan court of Mystras as well as at the Malatesti court of Rimini.¹³⁹ Not only was the Greek philosopher highly considered by the scholars gathering at the court in Rimini as attested in the writings of court intellectuals such as Basinio da

¹³⁸ Maurizio Landolfi, 'Ciriaco e il collezionismo di antichità greche nel piceno', in *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'umanesimo: atti del convegno internazionale di studio: Ancona, 6-9 febbraio 1992* (Reggio Emilia, 1998), 443–49, esp. 446 n. 23.

¹³⁹ On Plethon's influence on the cultural life of the Malatesti court in Rimini see in general Biblioteca civica Gambalunga, *Sul ritorno di Pletone: un filosofo a Rimini: atti del ciclo di conferenze* (Rimini: Raffaelli, 2003); Bertozzi, 'Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e il mito del paganesimo antico: dal Concilio di Ferrara al Tempio Malatestiano di Rimini'; Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea'; Wilhelm Blum, 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417–1468): Stadtherr von Rimini, Neuheide und Verehrer Plethons', in *Georgios Gemistos Plethon: The Byzantine and the Latin Renaissance* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2014), 11–38.

Parma, Giusto de' Conti and Roberto Valturio, but his importance is also recorded in the inclusion of Plethon's funerary monument in the exterior of the Tempio Malatestiano (Fig. 183, Fig. 184), the church dedicated to Saint Francis that Sigismondo restored from the forties of the fifteenth century in order to make it the monument celebrating the Malatesti.¹⁴⁰ We will discuss the Tempio Malatestiano in relation to Plethon's funerary monument further below in chapter V.¹⁴¹

The high regard in which Plethon's scholarship was held is also underscored by Ciriaco's role in the transmission of knowledge associated with the iconography of the elephant, a visual solution which merges a broad set of themes, from the debate on human virtues in Plethon's treaty, to references to Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and to Plutarch's *Moralia*. Ciriaco's elephant therefore became a *trait d'union* between two contexts, recognized in the West through the many reproductions of his drawings, and in the East by his connection with Kabakes, and his direct presence in the cultural environment that characterized Mystras at the time of Cleophe Malatesti, whose presence in the city and whose family ties, in light of these considerations, apparently played an important role in introducing the city in the broader cultural arena of the first half of the fifteenth century.

Within this arena, Cleophe became a role model of a Byzantine ruler, according to Plethon's oration. This is despite the fact that in her letters she laments her duality at court as a Catholic woman and as an Orthodox ruler. The supporting evidence for

¹⁴⁰ Studies on the Tempio Malatestiano are numerous. They have been recently surveyed and discussed in Antonio Paolucci, Marco Bertozzi, and Casalboni & Delucca, *Il Tempio Malatestiano a Rimini* (Modena: F. C. Panini, 2010).

¹⁴¹ See below ch. V.4.a Italian observers of Mystras, esp. 307-308

this duality found in the letters and primary sources allows us to describe her role between the Byzantine and the Western context.

Through the analysis of primary sources, we have seen that the Latin *Basilissa* Cleophe Malatesti was active in a long chain of agencies that related the Italian courts linked to the Malatesti family and to Ciriaco's endeavours, Ciriaco himself and Plethon, who provided a direct cultural link, the Latin princess, and the communities, both in Rimini and in Mystras, that were the recipients of the musical compositions and orations. The letters reveal a far more explicit diplomatic role than can be surmised by examining the artistic and cultural production, and, along with the other written sources, help us underpin the function of those cultural products as indices of political and social agency.

IV Visual Antiquarianism in Mystras

IV.1 Overview of the chapter and the meaning of antique

In exploring the agency of the Latin *basilissai* we have reviewed what we believe to be their direct agency in painted and sculpted details, found in the churches of Mystras. We also attempted a comparative analysis of the depiction of fashion, interpreted as an index of Latin women's agency. In the last chapter, we were able to examine primary written sources to substantiate our understanding of the nature of the agency of one of these Latin *basilissai*, Cleophe Malatesti. Along the way, we have explored the reverberation of this agency in artistic production that is proximate, yet liminal, to the women themselves, such as the depiction of male fashion or the drawing of an elephant by Ciriaco d'Ancona.

Despite the prominent role of these Latin women at court though, one of the challenges faced by this dissertation is that a very limited number of objects and records can be directly connected to them. They live, as we said in the introduction, in the shadow of documentary evidence. In order to support the analysis of their agency, we have to therefore progressively expand our circle of attention to find longer chains of relationships within which these women expressed their agency.

As discussed in the introduction, agency is expressed in an index through a social relationship, where a process of abduction can be activated, and can be expressed also by objects and mediated through multiple chains of relations.¹ It is in this context that our analysis can begin to encompass not just art objects that relate to the

¹ For a discussion on agency and for the agent-patient chain of relations, see above ch. I.4 - The methodology, esp. 32-35.

women, but also objects that relate to individuals who might have entered into some relation either with the women, or, more probably, in relation with objects and contexts that themselves were indices of the agency of the women, such as the context found at their court of origin or in Mystras itself. A number of such individuals are captured in documentary sources that have reached us, such as Plethon or Bessarion. However, their interest in the visual artistic production in Mystras is tangential. One important case study in this sense is however represented by Ciriaco d'Ancona, whom we have encountered in the previous chapter in the context of the discussion of the virtues of Cleophe.

Ciriaco was a Western intellectual and traveller, with a strong interest for the artistic production of the places he visited – his diaries and copies of his sketches have reached us, – and who had visited Mystras, had interacted with the court and with the intellectuals that resided there, and also had strong relationships with the court of origin of Cleophe Malatesti and other courts in Italy. He was therefore an agent, an index, and a patient in the complex web of relationships that surround the Latin *basilissai*.

However, to take advantage of this unusual role in interpreting the agency of the Latin princesses at the court of Mystras, we must engage with Ciriaco's primary interest in the region, which was antiquarian, and its relationship to the interest for antiquities present in Mystras at the time of his visits.

During his trips, Ciriaco d'Ancona collected and, most importantly, documented and surveyed antiquities. The historical relevance of Ciriaco's surveys rests in the fact

that they were conducted systematically, including written descriptions of visited sites and objects, detailed transcriptions of Latin and Greek inscriptions, and visual renditions of significant findings. These records were kept in diaries that Ciriaco shared with Byzantine and Italian scholars and artists, whom he knew thanks to his connection with the papacy and Italian aristocracy. The success of these diaries is well known, thanks to the many copies that were made from the Ciriaco's originals. The contemporary scholarship on Ciriaco agrees in recognizing his surveys as highly accurate; some even assign him the role of initiator of modern archaeology.²

Ciriaco's interest for the antique, which he developed at the Italian courts he frequented, finds a counterpart in the interest for the antique found in Mystras. He first documented the ruins of the ancient Sparta during his first visit to Mystras in 1436.³ The drawings Ciriaco made are now lost, but one of his drawings of the antique monuments was copied by Giuliano da Sangallo in the codex *Vaticanus Latinus 4424* (Vat. Lat. 4424), fol. 29r (Fig. 185A-B).⁴

Amongst the many scholars he met in Mystras was Laonikos Chalkokondyles (born Athens ca. 1423 or 1430 – died ca. 1490), a historian who wrote, in the 1480s, a

² Primary and secondary sources on Ciriaco d'Ancona's travels and diaries include d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvriam*; Morici, *Lettere inedite di Ciriaco d'Ancona, 1438-1440*; Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*; Scalamonti, Mitchell, and Bodnar, *Vita Viri Clarissimi et Famosissimi Kyriaci Anconitani*; Paci and Sconocchia, *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'umanesimo*; d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*; d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Life and Early Travels*; Chatzidakis, *Ciriaco d'Ancona und die Entdeckung Griechenlands im 15 Jahrhundert*.

³ d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvriam*, XXXVII, XXXVIII.

⁴ Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reproduzto in fototopia)*, vol. II, 39-45.

history of the Byzantine Empire.⁵ It was in his company that, on 2 August 1447, Ciriaco reported in his diaries visiting the antiquities of Sparta.⁶ Ciriaco's accounts of his visits to Sparta can be read as an exemplary case of indirect index of the agency of the Latin *basilissai* in Mystras, linked to the interaction between Ciriaco and Laonikos. We do not have evidence of direct discussions of the antique with the Latin women, but what Ciriaco's accounts offer are a link between the historical activities of the study of antiquity in Mystras and in the Italian courts he frequented, including Rimini, and a case study of visual antiquarianism contemporary to the Latin *basilissai*: the fresco of the Annunciation in the Pantanassa (Fig. 186). In this chapter, by analysing the architectural background depicted in the fresco of the Annunciation, we are able to interpret it as an expression of an interest in antiquities of the painters that realize it. In particular, we demonstrate that those artists were able to see specific ruins in Sparta that may have provided a model for the pictorial representation, such as the theatre, because we are able to show, through Ciriaco's accounts, that those ruins were partially freestanding and recognizable at the time of the fresco.

Discussing Byzantine reception of classical tradition and its use for cultural production is a complex task. Byzantine intellectuals had a persistent literary and textual interest towards classical tradition throughout the centuries.⁷ If text in knowledge transmission remained important throughout the history of the Byzantine

⁵ Anthony Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos: Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2014).

⁶ d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*, esp. 298-303.

⁷ Many distinguished Byzantinists have studied the reception of classical tradition, their work recently synthesized by Anthony Kaldellis in his *Hellenism in Byzantium*. See in particular Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 389.

Empire, knowledge was also transmitted through objects and visual exempla from the past. Doula Mouriki writes: ‘Antique “quotations” were used, as in the case of Byzantine literature, in different pictorial contexts and for varied purposes’.⁸ In addition, Anthony Kaldellis, while discussing the work of Michael Choniates (born ca. 1140 – died 1220), points out that Byzantine writers, in referring to vestiges of the past, were interested in providing *ekphrasis* of ancient Athenian ruins, as they were capable of activating the knowledge scholars acquired during their *paideia*, their intellectual training: ‘Athens was not a place for which Byzantine writers had to dredge up obscure mythological links in order to present it in classical garb. Its ruins came alive in their rhetorical imagination by activating so much knowledge they had absorbed along with their *paideia*’.⁹

I will borrow from the scholarship of Arnaldo Momigliano and use his understanding of antiquarianism to paraphrase the definition that I employ here. In his essay *Ancient History and the Antiquarian*,¹⁰ Momigliano points out that the so called “Age of the Antiquaries” of the eighteenth century developed a form of knowledge transmission and a new form of humanism, which were expressions of a time when

⁸ Mouriki, ‘Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism’, 458. On the complex issue of classical citations in Byzantine art, see Mouriki, 458 n. 2. For a general introduction to the complex issue of the Greco-Roman heritage of the Byzantine culture see the entry Antiquity in Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Vol. I, 120-2.

⁹ Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p. 324-5. On the issue of conveying aesthetic values and the use of the notion of beauty using the *ekphrasis* of an actual urban space, during the Early Byzantine period, see Helen G. Saradi, ‘The Kallos of the Byzantine City: The Development of a Rhetorical Topos and Historical Reality’, *Gesta* 34, no. 1 (1995): 37–56. More in general on Byzantine *ekphrasis* of art and architecture, see Henry Maguire, ‘Truth and Convention in Byzantine Descriptions of Works of Art’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28 (1974): 111–140; Ruth Macrides and Paul Magdalino, ‘The Architecture of Ekphrasis: Construction and Context of Paul the Silentiary’s Poem on Hagia Sophia’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12, no. 1 (1988): 47–82.

¹⁰ Arnaldo Momigliano, ‘Ancient History and the Antiquarian’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, no. 3/4 (1950): 285–315.

gentlemen and gentlewomen ‘preferred travel to the emendation of texts and altogether subordinated literary texts to coins, statues, vases and inscriptions’.¹¹

Antiquarianism is intended not just as attention to classical tradition, as expressed by the vast collection of literary knowledge that was an essential part of Byzantine education, culture and writing tradition. Rather, it is a more complex, intercultural, intellectual and artistic procedure. For the purposes of this study, antiquarianism is intended both as the resultant of multiple historical approaches to antiquity – for instance that typical of the intellectuals of the Byzantine court, or of foreign intellectuals travelling or residing in the region – as well as the precise procedure used by ‘an artist making within his own work a visual reference to a specific object from a remote past’.¹² Our definition is partially informed by the question that Amy Papalexandrou refers to in a recent essay on the use of *spolia* in the churches of medieval Morea: ‘Was the antique past a common denominator in the meeting of Latin West and Greek East in the Byzantine world after 1204?’¹³

The city of Mystras has always been marked by a connection to antiquity, partly because of its proximity to the ancient Lakedaimon, Sparta. This connection was an important feature of the early Byzantine city, and became increasingly relevant in the decades preceding the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1460. Several authors have remarked on the classicizing nature of the cultural production of the late Byzantine Empire and of Mystras in particular. Kalopissi-Verti, talking about the Peribleptos and Hagia Sophia, observes that the style of the wall paintings of both churches

¹¹ Momigliano, 285.

¹² Ernst Kitzinger, ‘A Virgin’s Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art’, *The Art Bulletin* 62, no. 1 (1980): 6–19, 7.

¹³ Papalexandrou, ‘The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past’, 25–6.

‘reflects a classicizing, idealizing tendency, which is in accordance with aristocratic taste during the period’, referring to the sixties and seventies of the fourteenth century.¹⁴

In this chapter, we will first examine how antiquarianism was expressed in Mystras even before the beginning of the Despotate, when the bishopric of Lakedaimonia moved from Sparta to Mystras. We will then focus on the specific case example of the Metropolis church and of details in the scene of the martyrdom of Hagios Demetrios to show how antiquarianism showed in visual production. Antiquarianism takes on a more specific meaning in the connection between Mystras and Sparta during the Despotate, when the court aspires to be an imperial capital and reflects a heterogeneous context characterized by the Latin wives of the Despots. This specific meaning will be examined in the last section of this chapter, where we will explore it, using the Pantanassa as a case study.

IV.2 Examples of visual antiquarianism

As noted in previous scholarship, evidence of visual antiquarianism is abundant in Mystras. In numerous instances, painters showed an interest in referencing antiquarian motifs, to provide visual rhetorical devices that expressed the erudition of the cultural and social context they belonged to.¹⁵ These include the antiquarian values associated with the depiction of youth, such as in the Nilotic figures

¹⁴ Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period’, 81.

¹⁵ Mouriki, ‘Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism’; Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium during the Palaiologan Period’, esp. 81; Papalexandrou, ‘The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past’.

recognized by Mouriki in the Baptism of Christ in the upper south gallery of the Church of the Hodegetria (Fig. 187A-B),¹⁶ or in the *spinario* and other children in the scene of the Entry into Jerusalem in the Pantanassa (Fig. 188A-C), where the reference to antiquity is also rendered by the depiction of ancient busts over the doorways of the city wall on the scene's backdrop (Fig. 188D).¹⁷ Other examples can be found in the depiction of garments such as those of the offering women in the scene of the Birth of the Theotokos in the Church of Hagios Demetrios (Fig. 189), or the same figures in the scene of the Birth of the Theotokos in the Peribleptos Monastery (Fig. 190A-C).

Further examples are the rendition of objects, such as the vase in the Annunciation scene in the Pantanassa (Fig. 191), the alabaster sarcophagus in the Resurrection of Lazarus in the Pantanassa (Fig. 46), or the *sarcophagi* in the scene of the Anastasis in the Pantanassa (Fig. 192, Fig. 193) that are decorated with mask motifs, depicting both human and lion heads. In the late Byzantine period, these mask motifs were widely used in miniatures and in the decoration of icons and frescoes and, according to Doula Mouriki, can be read as instances of 'highest secular and ecclesiastical patronage [of] special importance in terms of their cultural implications to antiquarian connotations'.¹⁸ It is important to notice that one of the decorations on one of the sarcophagi in the Anastasis (Fig. 192, Fig. 193), shows a rendition of the head of a lion, almost a direct rendition of a similar – although not identical – lion

¹⁶ The Nilotic figures in the Baptist scene of the Hodegetria are identified and discussed in Mouriki, 'Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism', esp. 316-20.

¹⁷ For the antiquarian values associated with the depiction of youth, see Mouriki, 'Palaeologan Mistra and the West', esp. 482-83.

¹⁸ Mouriki, 'The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting', 322.

head, which is part of a *clypeus* of a capital, now used as *spolia* in the wall of the Metropolis in Mystras (Fig. 194).

Another example of visual antiquarianism is that of the fresco floral decoration in the apsidal conch, east end bay, of the south upper gallery of the Pantanassa (Fig. 195- Fig. 197), where we also find a tridimensional geometric meander decoration (Fig. 198), and the fresco imitation of *opus sectile* (Fig. 199 – Fig. 204). The latter is also found in the Peribleptos (Fig. 205 – Fig. 208), along with the fresco decorations imitating glass, gem and bronze panels (Fig. 209, Fig. 210). From Early to late Byzantine period, the connection of *opus sectile* to antiquity is linked to the effect that this stone decoration achieves, which transfers also to its fresco rendition, embodying the ‘Neoplatonic hierarchy of lights, shining from earth below as a reflection of greater splendor’.¹⁹ While residing in Mystras, the last, great Neoplatonic philosopher of the Byzantine world, Gemistos Plethon, might have had an impact on the artistic production of the city, as the abundant use of *opus sectile* – both real and painted – in the churches of Mystras might be connected to him and to his Neoplatonic school.²⁰

One of the earliest examples of antiquarianism can be found in the metropolitan church of Mystras dedicated to Hagios Demetrios and seat of the bishop of Lakedaimonia (Table 22 – Table 24). The church has a basilica plan with a central nave and side aisles divided by two sets of three columns. It has two levels: a ground floor and a gallery (Table 22, Table 24). On the ground level, the church has a

¹⁹ Henry Maguire, ‘Heaven on Earth: Neoplatonism in the Churches of Greece’, in *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 53–65, 63.

²⁰ Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement’, 2013, vol. I, esp. 238; Shawcross, ‘A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea’.

narthex and an exonarthex to the west, and a portico along the north façade (Table 24 Fig. 10).²¹ Founded in the second part of the thirteenth century, the church went through several transformations.

Bishop Nikephoros Moschopoulos of Lakedaimonia, also known for his collection of manuscripts, transformed the church around 1291 (Fig. 211). His name is recorded on an inscription on the exterior of the church, on the wall of the exonarthex close to the exterior staircase leading to the upper level of the church.²² The first part of the inscription reads: “Nikephoros the humble proedros of Crete along with the brother Aaron makes new this divine home while Andronikos Palaiologos with his son Michael is powerfully holding the sceptre”.²³ Rather than rendering the dedicatory inscription on a fresco, a very common solution for the period, he chose to have it done as an inscription on a stone slab, a classicizing statement in itself. The inscription says the intervention on the church occurred while Andronikos II and Michael IX Palaiologos were reigning. The word Moschopoulos used to refer to Andronikos is σκηπτροκρατοῦντος *skeptrokratountos*, the present participle active masculine genitive singular of the verb σκηπτροκράτῃω, *skeptokrateo*, *sceptrum teneo* – to powerfully hold/control the sceptre.²⁴ The use of this verb to indicate the

²¹ For an introduction and secondary sources on the church, see below Hagios Demetrios in Appendix 02, 344-347.

²² On the inscription, see Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, 121-2.

²³ The first part of the inscription reads:

[1] Τὸν θεῖον οἶκον τόνδε καινουργεῖ πόθω
κρήτης πρόεδρος εὐτελής νικηφόρος
ἔχων ἀδελφὸν ἀρῶν συνεργάτην
σκηπτροκρατοῦντος αὐσόνων ἀνδρονίκου
[5] παλαιολόγου σὺν μιχαὴλ υἱεῖ

in Millet, 122. For a study of the inscription see Μανούσος Μανούσακας, ‘Ἡ χρονολογία της κτιτορικής επιγραφῆς του Αγίου Δημητρίου του Μυστρά’, *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Εταιρείας* 19 (1960): 70–79.

²⁴ See ‘σκηπτροκράτῃω: *sceptrum teneo*, Regno. Const. Manass. Chron. 2046, 2638, 2736 at alibi *sæpe*’, in Henri Estienne, *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae, Ab Henrico Stephano Constructus* (Paris: Excudebat A. Firmin Didot, 1831), vol. VII, 374.

regency of power has a classical reference: it was used by a historian of the eleventh century, Constantine Manasses (born ca. 1130 – died 1187) in his *Chronike synopsis*, at v. 2638, where he used the expression ‘Οὐαλεντινιανῶ σκηπτροκρατοῦντι’, to Valens ruling.²⁵ His work is known for its Homeric references, and this expression was a reference to Homer: the word σκηπτρον recurred with the highest frequency, amongst Classic authors, in Homer’s first three books of the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*.²⁶ By using the verb *skeptrokratountos*, Moschopoulos did not employ a noun to refer to the imperial staff in use at his time, while it should be noted that in the fourteenth-century *Treaty* by Pseudo-Kodinos both the staff used by the emperor and the ones assigned to different court officials were called *dikanikia*.²⁷

Moschopoulos, as Manasses, was interested in Homer. The *proedros* was known for his substantial library, requiring four horses to transport. It included a copy of the *Odyssey* compiled by Manuel Gabalas, known as Bishop Matthew of Ephesos (born ca. 1271/2 – died ante 1359/60), also a scholar of Homer.²⁸ This copy of the *Odyssey* is particularly relevant because it shows the interest Moschopoulos had in antiquarian erudition and in the study of this classical text, from which he could have taken the specific reference to *skeptrokratountos*. His copy of the *Odyssey* is now in a codex of the Biblioteca Malatestiana, Cesena, the manuscript *Malatestiana*

²⁵ In PG 127, p. 349. Constantine Manasses’ *Chronike synopsis* has ‘abundance of Homeric images’ and it uses verbal expressions derived from Homer. He and Moschopoulos used the same participle while addressing the reigning Emperor. See ‘Manasses, Constantine’ in Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.

²⁶ For a discussion on the uses, declensions and implication of the word σκηπτρον, *skeptron*, sceptre or staff, in the *Iliad* I.14-5, I.234-9, II.86, II.100-1, II.128, II.186, II.198-9, II.278-82, III.218-9 see G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad, a Commentary*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 55, 77, 78, 124, 126, 128, 134, 136, 145, 296.

²⁷ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, 336-9, esp. 336 n. 114.

²⁸ Robert Browning, ‘A Fourteenth-Century Prose Version of the “Odyssey”’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 27–36, esp. 28.

D.XXVII.2.²⁹ Moschopoulos' hand has been identified in a couple of hexameters at f. 204v, as well as in other comments and emendations on several parts of the text.³⁰

The manuscript also contains handwritten annotations by Ciriaco d'Ancona himself, indicating that it was in Ciriaco's possession before being given to Malatesta Novello Malatesti, a cousin of Cleophe Malatesti, founder of the library in Cesena.³¹

Antiquarianism manifested itself in the Metropolis also in another instance. The capitals of four of the six columns in the central nave appear similar, but reveal slightly different details in their design,³² suggesting that they are *spolia* (Fig. 212A-C – Fig. 215A-C, Table 24 Fig. 12A-C).³³ The use of *spolia* was not unusual in Byzantine architecture, but the way in which these particular capitals were employed inside Hagios Demetrios is singular.³⁴ The four capitals are very similar to Corinthian

²⁹ For a description of the codex, see 'Scheda Codice Completa Malatestiana D.XXVII.2', Catalogo aperto Manoscritti Malatestiani, accessed 8 July 2016, http://catalogoaperto.malatestiana.it/ricerca/?oldform=mostra_codice_completo.jsp?CODICE_ID=143.

³⁰ To Moschopoulos' hand are attributed comments in the lower margins of the manuscript at ff. 12v, 13r, 19v, 27v, 198v, and integrations at ff. 4r, 146r, 149r, 150r, in 'Scheda Codice Completa Malatestiana D.XXVII.2'.

³¹ Anna Pontani, 'Ciriaco d'Ancona e la Biblioteca Malatestiana di Cesena', in *Filologia umanistica per Gianvito Resta*, ed. Vincenzo Fera and Giacomo Ferraù, vol. II (Padova: Antenore, 1997), 1465–83.

³² See Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 46.1-4.

³³ Papalexandrou has recently noted that after 1204 'Exterior walls [...] demonstrate the tendency to incorporate spolia as a widespread phenomenon, one that likely depended on the coexistence of a nearby ancient site and an exceptional patron or builder who was free to enjoy the economic advantages, aesthetic possibilities, and legendary connections they offered', in Papalexandrou, 'The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past', 26. For an in-depth study of the use of spolia in the Medieval Mediterranean, see in general Michael Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present: Building with Antiquities in the Mediaeval Mediterranean* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009).

³⁴ For an introduction on *spolia* in Byzantine architecture, see Robert G. Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press [1999], 2008), esp. 140-5. For the use of *spolia* in Middle Byzantine architecture, the Monastery of Saint John Chrysostomos at Koutsovendis, Cyprus, see Tassos Papacostas, Cyril Mango, and Michael Grünbart, 'The History and Architecture of the Monastery of Saint John Chrysostomos at Koutsovendis, Cyprus', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 61 (2007): 25–156, esp. 113.

capitals known as “waterleaves” or *Blattekeln*, or “Tower of the Winds” capitals,³⁵ found all around the Mediterranean, in Greece, and around Mystras. Even though the architect in charge for the renovation is unknown, the inscription clearly records the intervention of the bishop, who must have supported the use of four similar *spolia* as part of his renovation.³⁶ While this instance was singular, careful use of selected *spolia* to express an antiquarian value in an act of patronage was not unheard of. For example, around the same years, the Latin Archbishop of Corinth William of Moerbeke (1278–1285) is thought to have been heavily involved in the decoration of the church of Dormition of the Theotokos, in the village of Hagia Triada (Merbaka), where he makes similar use of *spolia*.³⁷

We now turn to the detailed analysis of a specific example of how antiquarianism was expressed in Mystras: the way in which armours worn by some of the military figures are rendered in a scene of the life of Hagios Demetrios (Fig. 216, Fig. 229, Table 24 Fig. 13, Table 24 Fig. 18).

Erected in Mystras in the late thirteenth century, the metropolitan church was dedicated to Hagios Demetrios of Thessalonike, martyr of the faith, who was put to

³⁵ On the Corinthian “water leaf” capitals, see Peter Liljenstolpe, ‘The Roman Blattkelch Capital: Typology, Origin and Aspects of Employment’, *Opuscula Romana* 22–23 (1998): 91–126; Patrizio Pensabene, ‘Marmi e committenza negli edifici di spettacolo in Campania’, *Marmora* 1 (2005): 69–143; Oliver Becker, ‘Spolie oder Neuanfertigung?: zu einem antiken Kapitelltyp in der Krypta der Kathedrale von Otranto’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 114 (2009): 439–92.

³⁶ On the use of *spolia* in other parts of the bishopric complex, see Helen G. Saradi, ‘The Use of Ancient *Spolia* in Byzantine Monuments: The Archaeological and Literary Evidence’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3, no. 4 (1997): 395–423, esp. 419–20. On the use of *spolia* in Hagios Demetrios, see also Papalexandrou, ‘The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past’, 44–7.

³⁷ Papalexandrou, ‘The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past’, 29–35; Guy D. R. Sanders, ‘William of Moerbeke’s Church at Merbaka: The Use of Ancient *Spolia* to Make Personal and Political Statements’, *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 84, no. 3 (2015): 583–626.

death by the Roman Emperor Maximian.³⁸ The cult of the martyr went through a period of intense revival in the late Byzantine period, in Thessalonike as well as in other parts of the Empire, due to the importance the imperial family gave to him after selecting him as patron saint.³⁹ After the recovery of Constantinople in 1261, members of the ruling imperial families, in particular those of the Palaiologoi, promoted his role as protector of the Orthodox world through architectural patronage and literary commissions. The latter were part of a larger phenomenon that saw an extensive production of hagiographical texts, roughly 125 *vitae* and encomia during the Palaiologan era, most of which celebrate older saints of the Orthodox tradition while only a few, roughly 40, celebrate contemporary saints.⁴⁰ Of these, 26 are dedicated to Hagios Demetrios, celebrating the Saint as μεγαλομάρτυρ, *megalomartyr* and μυρόβλυτος, *myroblytos* — Great Martyr of the Faith and *myron* provider — as well as recounting the many miracles that he performed in life and after his death through the venerated *myron*, the sacred ointment exuding from what was believed to be his tomb.⁴¹

³⁸ For a discussion on the origin and the cult of Hagios Demetrios, see James Constantine Skedros, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector, 4th-7th Centuries CE*, vol. 47, Harvard Theological Studies ; (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), esp. 41-83; Eugenia Russell, *St. Demetrius of Thessalonica: Cult and Devotion in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), esp. 9-28.

³⁹ On Hagios Demetrios as patron saint of the Palaiologan dynasty in Thessaloniki and in the Peloponnese, see Russell, *St. Demetrius of Thessalonica*, esp. 9-28; Kappas, 'Approaching Monemvasia and Mystras from the Outside: The View from Kastania', esp. 172-4, and 173 n. 98.

⁴⁰ Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Hagiography in Late Byzantium (1204-1453)', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiades, vol. I. Periods and Places (Ashgate, 2011), 173-95.

⁴¹ On the *vitae* of Hagios Demetrios, see Russell, *St. Demetrius of Thessalonica*, esp. pp. 29-82. For a survey of Byzantine and post-Byzantine texts dedicated to Hagios Demetrios, see Βασίλειος Λαούρδας, 'Βυζαντινά και μεταβυζαντινά εγκώμια εις τον Άγιον Δημήτριον', *Μακεδονικά* 4 (1960): 47-162.

After the middle of the thirteenth century the cult of Hagios Demetrios also grew in Lakonia where at least seven churches were dedicated to the Saint.⁴² One of these churches is the Metropolis of Mystras, featuring an extensive pictorial programme with scenes from the life of the martyr on the vaults covering the north lower lateral aisle,⁴³ which, as pointed out by Michalis Kappas, ‘in the 1270s had an enormous impact on the dedication and decoration of many Peloponnesian churches in the following decades’.⁴⁴ For devotional reasons one of the most important scenes of the Saint's life is the one of his martyrdom, depicted just above the north entrance to the church (Fig. 216, Table 24 Fig. 18).

The scene of the martyrdom in the Metropolis shows an elaborate treatment and arrangement of its figures. In particular, the role given to the soldier in the centre of the composition stands out visually. He embodies the main signifier of the violent act of the martyrdom, and his figurative and iconographical features are distinctive. His body is portrayed frontally, legs slightly apart, both arms bent in front of the torso, hands clutching the lance that is pushed through the body of Hagios Demetrios. Both arms are slightly bent, suggesting an upward and leftward movement, since the soldier is pushing the lance towards the saint while balancing his torso in the opposite direction. The tall, carefully rendered figure takes centre stage in the entire composition. The overall impression is one of stillness, reinforced by comparison with the three soldiers behind him, who are considerably more dynamic in their

⁴² Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium*, 111 and 111 n. 50.

⁴³ On the iconography of the scenes of the life of Hagios Demetrios, see Ανδρέας Ξυγγόπουλος, *Ο Εικονογραφικός κύκλος της ζωής του Αγίου Δημητρίου* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Εταιρεία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών, 1970); Walter, *Studies in Byzantine Iconography*, 169–74; Judith White Clark, *The Life Cycle of St. Demetrios in an Early 14th Century Illuminated Manuscript in the Bodleian Library*, 1996; Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 67–93.

⁴⁴ Kappas, ‘Approaching Monemvasia and Mystras from the Outside: The View from Kastania’, 174, 174 and 174 n. 102.

visual arrangement. Their bodies are more active and, consequently, appear more engaged in killing the saint. While the figure of the martyr appears conventionally seated on the left side, the group with the four perpetrators of the execution offers a significant iconographical variation. In particular, the lack of dynamism in the soldier's body parts, his static appearance, is something that distinguishes this depiction from others of the same iconographic motif.

Usually the saint is shown transfixed by lances while praying, and the soldier or soldiers instructed for the execution stand on the opposite side of the scene. For example, this iconography appears at fol. 120v of the *Menologion* of Basil II - Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, *Ms. Gr. 1613* - (Fig. 217A-B) and fol. 55 r of the *Menologion* commissioned by Demetrios Palaiologos of Thessalonike now in the Bodleian library at Oxford - Bodleian - *MS Gr. Th. f. I* - (Fig. 218A-B).⁴⁵ In these two examples, the first from the late tenth century and the second from the second half of the fourteenth century, the same martyrdom scene is depicted slightly differently. In the first scene, there is only one soldier executing the saint, in the second there are two.

The *Menologion* of Demetrios Palaiologos does not contain any text, it collects only images related to the major feasts of the liturgical Orthodox year, and has sections specifically devoted to illustrating the lives of the major saints. Amongst these saints and martyrs of the church, is Hagios Demetrios. His visual *synargion* occupies two

⁴⁵ For the Basil II *Menologion*, see Biblioteca apostolica vaticana. Manuscript, *Il menologio di Basilio II (cod. vaticano greco 1613)*, vol. VIII [Series maior] (Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1907). The Demetrios Palaiologos *Menologion* is at Bodleian, Oxford, MS Gr. Th. f. I, see in general Otto Pächt, *Byzantine Illumination*, Bodleian Picture Books, no. 8 (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1952), 8–9; Walter, *Studies in Byzantine Iconography*, 167.

whole pages of the manuscript.⁴⁶ In these two pages the life of the saint is told in seven small scenes, the sixth of which is the martyrdom. In this scene, two soldiers on the left of the scene approach the martyr and, with lances, put him to death (Fig. 218A-B). The martyr is seated within the iconographic depiction of the prison/bath, where the execution took place according to the *synargion*. Here, the scene of the martyr uses an iconographic treatment similar to that shown in a twelfth-century reliquary from the Vatopedi monastery.⁴⁷ The silver reliquary is a double-lidded silver box measuring 11.7 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm, meant to contain the holy *myron*. It is decorated on the top with an icon of the martyr and with six scenes depicting the life of Hagios Demetrios on one of the short sides, the two side panels, and the bottom.⁴⁸ One of the scenes on the side of the reliquary shows the martyrdom of the saint using an iconographic rendition similar to the one employed in fol. 55 r of the *Menologion* of Demetrios Palaiologos (Fig. 219A-B).

The soldiers in the martyrdom of the Vatopedi silver reliquary are portrayed in dynamic poses. Here, the holy martyr is caught by the lances of only two soldiers. Both soldiers are portrayed with their lances pushed forward toward the saint, with a dynamic arrangement of their bodies reflecting the intensity of the moment. The dynamism in their bodies is also emphasized by the hieratic posture of the martyr who, while being killed, is praying with his hands raised towards God and his face

⁴⁶ On the *Menologion*, see also Hans Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch in der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1970), 14–15, 42–45, 48, 58, fig. 28; Walter, *Studies in Byzantine Iconography*, 167–68; Otto Demus and Irmgard Hutter, eds., *Corpus Der Byzantinischen Miniaturenhandschriften* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1977), fig. 91.

⁴⁷ For the silver reliquary from the Vatopedi monastery, see André Grabar, 'Quelques reliquaires de saint Démétrios et le martyrium du saint à Salonique', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 1+3-28, esp. 3-5; Clark, *The Life Cycle of St. Demetrios in an Early 14th Century Illuminated Manuscript in the Bodleian Library*, esp. 72-5; Andreas Rhoby, Anneliese Paul, and Wolfram Hörandner, *Byzantinische Epigramme in inschriftlicher Überlieferung* (Wien: ÖAW, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), Vol. II, 471 abb. XXXIX.

⁴⁸ Grabar, 'Quelques reliquaires de saint Démétrios et le martyrium du saint à Salonique', 5.

turned towards the two soldiers approaching from his right. Both soldiers are depicted with similar detail and there is no visual predominance of one over the other. A similarly dramatized scene, where all the soldiers are dynamically engaged in the killing of the martyr, can be seen in later frescoes and icons such as the fresco in the Holy Apostles in Thessalonike (Fig. 220),⁴⁹ and the wooden icon of the second half of the fifteenth century originally from the isle of Crete and now at the Hellenic Institute in Venice (Fig. 221).⁵⁰

In the Metropolis, the painter used the centrality of the figure of the soldier and the holding position with which he is portrayed to emphasize his military garments. The soldier is not dressed according to the late Byzantine iconographic tradition of the typical Roman soldier of late Antique periodization, as seen, for example, in the Vatopedi reliquary, or in the frescoed depiction of the Roman soldiers in the martyrdom scene in the church of St Peter in Kastania, near Mystras, which Michalis Kappas links to the one in Mystras (Fig. 222).⁵¹ His costume is also different from that worn by the two soldiers guarding Hagios Demetrios while imprisoned in the bath (Fig. 223). And it is different from the iconographic standard, found in many other examples of Roman soldiers portrayed in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Byzantine art.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ανδρέας Ξυγγοπουλος, 'Η τοιχογραφία του μαρτυρίου του Αγίου Δημητρίου εις τους Αγίους Αποστόλους Θεσσαλονίκης', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 8 (1976): 1–18, σ. 2 εικ. 1 και π. 1.

⁵⁰ The fifteenth/sixteenth-century icon with the depiction of the Martyrdom of Hagios Demetrios, canvas on wood, 53x50.5 cm. It is attributed to a Cretan painter. It is in the collection of the Hellenic Institute in Venice. See Maria Cristina Bandera Viani, *Venezia: Museo delle icone bizantine e post bizantine e Chiesa di San Giorgio dei Greci* (Bologna: Calderini, 1988), 61 fig. 86, 62; Manoles Chatzedakes, 'L'icône byzantine', in *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte / Fondazione Giorgio Cini*, vol. 2 (Venezia: Neri Pozza, 1959), 37–8, fig. 25.

⁵¹ Kappas, 'Approaching Monemvasia and Mystras from the Outside: The View from Kastania', 173–74.

⁵² In relation to the iconography of soldiers and of warrior saints in the middle and late Byzantine iconography, see Piotr Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation*

In the martyrdom fresco of the Metropolis the soldier does not carry a shield and is wearing a red tunic - a *himation*, or *peristethidia* - indicating that he is an officer. Officers commonly used a red *peristethidia*, while regular soldiers usually wore the white *peristethidia*.⁵³ However, even if this central figure was an officer, he is not wearing a Roman *lorica* - the upper part of the Roman armour, worn for instance by Hagios Demetrios in his portrait as a military saint inside the *naos* of the Metropolis (Table 24 Fig 16, Table 24 Fig 17).

On top of the *himation*, he wears a white garment, which looks like a modified version of a “muscled cuirass”, embroidered (Fig. 216, Fig. 229). The front of the abdominal area is decorated with a brooch, similar to the one decorating the armour of the soldier of the Vatopedi reliquary (Fig. 219B). The muscled cuirass is a piece of equipment used by officers in the late Roman Empire. The Byzantine army adopted it, along with a back-plate for torso protection, in direct continuity with the Greek-Roman breast-plate (Fig. 224, Fig. 225).⁵⁴ This kind of military attire was used to depict officers in the Byzantine army, members of the imperial family but also Byzantine military saints and soldiers who had different roles in iconographic scenes accompanying the life of saints.

in *Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2010), 843–1261; Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, 101–58.

⁵³ On the colour configuration of the army, see Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, 174–76.

⁵⁴ ‘Body armour in a form that imitates the musculature of the human torso is derived from ancient Greece, where it was introduced as a reference to the tradition of the *gymnetes*, who went naked into battle after commending themselves into the care of the gods. The so-called ‘muscled’ or torso cuirass was made up of a breastplate and a backplate, which were fastened together-as Aelian notes-with the aid of linen laces’, in Grotowski, 129.

In military practice, the muscled cuirass became obsolete by the sixth century.⁵⁵ By the late period, this kind of body armour had also become obsolete in military figurative repertoires, favouring instead scale body armours, lamellar cuirasses – a derivative of the Roman *lorica squamata* – or *klibanion*, as worn by the Roman soldiers in the martyrdom scene in the church of St Peter in Kastania (Fig. 222) or by Hagios Nestor in the scene depicted on the right of the martyrdom of Hagios Demetrios (Fig. 226). In this scene Nestor is shown killing Lyaoes while wearing a late Antique Roman officer armour composed of a lower tunic, a cuirass with a *lorica squamata*, and a cape fixed around the neck and around the waist, in a representation typical of a high ranking officer in the Roman army, rendered with a high degree of attention to detail, and showing a critical understanding of what an antique *lorica squamata* looked like, despite not being in use by the Byzantine army.

In the Middle Byzantine period, lower ranking officers of the Byzantine army began to wear a soft armour known as *neurika*, or *lorikion psilos*, or linen armour.⁵⁶ The use of the soft armour, in linen or pelt, became more and more common in the late Byzantine period when warrior saints were sometimes depicted wearing this kind of armour. Iconographically it was rendered as a garment covered by rhomboids. An example of this can be seen worn by Hagios Demetrios in a steatite icon of the thirteenth/fourteenth century depicting the saint while riding a horse (Fig. 227).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The obsolescence of this kind of body protection is pointed out in John F. Haldon, 'Some Aspects of Byzantine Military Technology from the Sixth to the Tenth Centuries', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1975): 11–47.

⁵⁶ 'Soft armour had been known since antiquity, especially in the late Classical period, under the name λινόθώραξ (Lat. *lorica lintea*, linen armour). In the Byzantine army it appears as νευρικά and, as is evident from the military treatises, must have played an important role. The manuals make repeated recommendations that this type of cuirass should be worn by warriors who do not have more solid protection, especially those in the rear ranks of battle formation. Military saints are, however, shown in such armour only occasionally', in Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, 152.

⁵⁷ The icon is now at the Kremlin Museum in Moscow, see Grotowski, 153.

The twelfth- / thirteenth-century church of Hagios Georgios Diasoritis in Naxos shows one of the earliest depictions of a military saint in a 'soft' cuirass. A fresco depicts the saint wearing a light-grey padded corselet with elbow-length sleeves (Fig. 228).⁵⁸ In the imprisonment scene in the life cycle of the martyr in the Metropolis in Mystras the two soldiers guarding Hagios Demetrios both wear a similar soft armour (Fig. 223). This iconographic motif 'of the quilted armour corselet [...] only became commonplace in the military saint iconography at the time of the Palaiologan dynasty',⁵⁹ a dynasty that saw in the Saint its most important patron and most relevant 'heavenly ally'.⁶⁰

We argue that the central soldier in the martyrdom of Hagios Demetrios in the Metropolis wears a unique rendition of this soft armour, as revealed by the folds on the lower part of the armour itself (Fig. 229). The soldier, in the act of clutching the lance with his right hand, also grasps part of the fabric of the armour, creating a pattern of semi horizontal folds just below the lance. This detail was added to increase the level of realism of the picture, since it suggests that the right hand was secured from sliding on the lance by holding the fabric, and it indicates the softness of the fabric employed for the external armour.

The white colour used to depict the armour, the embroidered details and the folds under the arms and on the front lower part, all indicate that the soldier is wearing a

⁵⁸ Grotowski, fig 49. The fresco is controversially dated, see Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, 152 n. 113. Some scholars date the fresco to the eleventh century, see Manoles Chatzedakes, Nikolaos V. Drandakes, and M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Naxos* (Athens: Melissa, 1989), 67. Other to the twelfth, early thirteenth century, see Σ. Κίτσου, 'Βυζαντινά, Μεσαιωνικά και Νεώτερα Μνημεία Νήσων του Αιγαίου', *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* 33, no. Χρονικά Β 1 (1978): 342–51, esp. 345–6.

⁵⁹ Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, 154 n. 119.

⁶⁰ Robert S. Nelson, 'Heavenly Allies at the Chora', *Gesta* 43, no. 1 (2004): 31–40, 36.

neurika or *lorikion psilos*, the soft version of the armour. It was also meant to look like an ancient muscled cuirass or *lorica*, because it is worn on top of a lower tunic, features prominent pectoral muscles, and has a rhomboid shaped brooch in the centre of the abdominal area. In a sense, the soldier is wearing a compromise between the muscled cuirass and the soft armour, similar to the rendition of the twelfth-/thirteenth-century body armour worn by Hagios Georgios in the Asinou church in Cyprus (Fig. 230).⁶¹

The detailed rendition of the garments is an interpretation of an antique armour, but depicted as if made with soft materials typical of armours of the lower rank officers in the late Byzantine army. In other words, the artist used the form of the late Antique armour, but communicated rank with the material used in the late Byzantine army.

This unique visual rendition became the medium to express a visual culture that did not just limit itself to the imitation of ancient models, but evoked and reinterpreted the past with a subtle degree of originality, measured within the limits of the authoritative standards of orthodox visual convention.⁶² As noted by Sharon Gerstel, in the late thirteenth-century and fourteenth-century Morea, the originality in the

⁶¹ Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, 127; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, 136 and fig. 32.

⁶² While considering the iconographic tradition of illuminating manuscripts Brubaker points out 'Gradual and hesitant iconographical shifts [...] underscore a fundamental point relevant to any consideration of "originality" in Byzantine manuscript illumination. In sharp distinction from art produced in the Western world from the time of the Renaissance through the modern period, Byzantine imagery was not valued particularly for its uniqueness, but for its power and authority. It was firmly embedded in the symbolic structures of Byzantine culture, and engaged in constant dialogue with its audience. "Originality" in Byzantium is thus not innovation for its own sake; rather, changes in the configuration of a given subject are essentially social changes, and like other social changes they are modulated by an array of factors, such as the status of the patron or the recipient, or indeed to status of the manuscript itself. Change is therefore rarely completely consistent, and we should not expect it to be', in Leslie Brubaker, 'Originality in Byzantine Manuscript Illumination', in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995), 147–66, 150.

rendition of these armours was also informed by exchanges with the visual repertoire offered by the circulation of Crusader military related art, which had an influence in the Latinized rendition of the armours of military saints in the churches of the region.⁶³

IV.3 The local antique in the Pantanassa frescoes

Between the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century, the connection between Mystras and Sparta was marked by many factors, the most important of which was the significant number of erudite scholars and intellectuals who came to study in Mystras at the school of Plethon. As we first saw above in chapter III,⁶⁴ the codex *Mut. Gr. 144* is a testament to that cultural environment. Copied in Mystras by initiative of Kabakes (Table 9),⁶⁵ the codex reflects the scholarly production associated with Plethon and testifies to his interests in antiquity, fostered by the proximity to ancient Sparta.⁶⁶ Plethon was an assiduous promoter of the revival of ancient philosophy, in particular of Plato.⁶⁷

Aiming at the salvation of the Byzantine Empire from the Ottoman threat, Plethon sought to oppose it partially through an alliance and union with the Latins, and turned ‘to antiquity in search of common ground between East and West’.⁶⁸ Alliances and openness to the West were mirrored by the admiration Plethon enjoyed in Italian

⁶³ Gerstel, ‘Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea’.

⁶⁴ See above ch. III.6 - Ciriaco d’Ancona and the elephant on the page, 182-193.

⁶⁵ See above 182 n. 102.

⁶⁶ Shawcross, ‘A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea’.

⁶⁷ Gemistos Plethon was drawn to study ancient and Platonic philosophy by Demetrios Kydones, whose 1366 memorandum entitled Ρωμαίοις συμβουλευτικός, also known as the *Oratio pro subsidio Latinorum*, claimed a renewed bond between Latins and Greeks, both being ultimately Romans. See Siniosoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium*, 349.

⁶⁸ In Siniosoglou, 350.

courts, as attested by those in Rimini and Florence (Fig. 183, Fig. 184).⁶⁹ According to Siniossoglou, who has worked extensively on his scholarship, Plethon put forward the idea that a possible vehicle for salvation of the Hellenes, the Byzantines, was not just antiquity, but the ‘modern reception of antiquity’.⁷⁰ Plethon, following his teacher Demetrios Kydones, saw antiquity as a vehicle to inform the issues troubling the Byzantine emperor and the Despots of Morea.⁷¹

Christos Baloglou points out that Plethon was pursuing a ‘deliberate and conscious attempt to link [...] cultural tradition to the standards of classical Greece and an evocation of ancient Sparta and its lawgiver Lycurgus’⁷², whose *Laws* Plethon considered as the basis of Byzantine/Greek civilization.⁷³ Teresa Shawcross remarks of Plethon: ‘It was not, he tells us, until a descendant of Heracles, the lawgiver Lykurgos, established by legislation a “celebrated [...] constitution” (*epainoumenen* [...] *politeian*) that the Spartans acquired hegemony in Greece; while it was only after the Spartans allowed that constitution to fall into decay that they were defeated and deprived of their power. Thus Gemistos looked to Sparta, and particularly to Sparta as she was represented in earlier political philosophy, such as that of the Hellenistic and late antique eras, when seeking to represent the outlines of the kind of polity he wished to see take shape in the Despotate of the Morea’.⁷⁴ For the

⁶⁹ On Plethon see above ch. III.5 - Funeral orations, 177-178 esp. 177 n. 86.

⁷⁰ Siniossoglou, *Radical Platonism in Byzantium*, esp. 349-50.

⁷¹ Plethon, as many other scholars of his time, was fully aware of the problems of the Empire, and in his writings, in particular the ones he addressed to the Despots of Morea, recommended social, economic and military reforms for the salvation of the Peloponnese and of the whole Byzantine state. See Siniossoglou, esp. 327-92.

⁷² Christos P. Baloglou, ‘The Institutions of Ancient Sparta in the Works of Pletho’, *Antike und Abendland* 51 (2005): 137–149.

⁷³ Plethon, Georgios Gemistos, ‘Advice to Theodoros II regarding the Peloponnese’, edited by Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930:116-17, 126-27. Also see Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos*, esp. 207-36.

⁷⁴ Shawcross, ‘A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea’, 435.

Byzantine Despots of Morea, Sparta was therefore a presence, a source of inspiration, a historical example for the administration, the development, the defence and, not least, the cultural flourishing of their capital.

Mystras became an international cultural centre, and the importance of ancient Sparta is revealed in the accounts of Ciriaco d'Ancona, one of the earliest informed travellers in the region (Fig. 170). Ciriaco's findings and surveys were included in diaries. As discussed above, Ciriaco visited Mystras both in 1436-7 and in 1447-8, meeting members of the Palaiologan imperial family, Plethon and the scholars gathered around him.⁷⁵ During the first visit he met with Despot Theodore II Palaiologos and visited the city of Sparta for the first time (Fig. 170D-E).

During the second visit in Mystras, he met Despots Thomas and Constantine Palaiologos, future Emperor Constantine XI, Plethon and his student, the scholar Laonikos Chalkokondyles, whose *Histories* were later composed following the classic model of Herodotus. On 2 August 1447 Ciriaco recorded a second visit to the antiquities of Sparta accompanied by Laonikos.⁷⁶ The connection between Sparta and Mystras was so strong that it outlived the end of Byzantine ruling of the city. Still, in the late seventeenth century the Venetian cosmographer Coronelli described the city as "Sparta hoggidi Misitra", Sparta nowadays Mystras (Fig. 231).⁷⁷

One of the last buildings to be completed in the city of Mystras under Palaiologan rule was the *katholikon* of the monastery dedicated to the Theotokos Pantanassa (Fig.

⁷⁵ See above III.6 - Ciriaco d'Ancona and the elephant on the page, 183-185.

⁷⁶ d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*, esp. 301.

⁷⁷ Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione*.

293, Table 33 – Table 36).⁷⁸ A member of the prominent aristocratic family of the Phrangopoulos sponsored the construction of the church. As we will see in Chapter V,⁷⁹ Ioannes Phrangopoulos was *protostrator* and *katholikos mesazon*, prime minister to Theodore I and Theodore II, and his name is recorded on two inscriptions, one now lost, dating to 1428,⁸⁰ the other one on the dome of the upper galleries above the narthex (Fig. 233). Monograms on one of the capitals in the *naos* record his name and role (Fig. 234A-B).

Another distinguished individual associated with the church is portrayed in the narthex. His name, Manuel Laskaris, is recorded on an epitaph dating to 1445. He was a member of one the most important aristocratic families of Morea (Fig. 8). The role these two aristocrats played in the evolution of the church is evidence of elites capable of requesting visual standards driven by a form of antiquarian appreciation.

The church and its interior decorations are known as one of the highest achievements by an early fifteenth-century Byzantine workshop. Scholars such as Manoles Chatzedakes, Doula Mouriki and Thalia Gouma-Peterson have already noted several of the details and innovations introduced by this workshop.⁸¹ Most of Chatzedakes' and Gouma-Peterson's observations point to connections with fourteenth-century Constantinopolitan trends. Gouma-Peterson also highlights possible exchanges

⁷⁸ On the architecture and decoration of the *katholikon* of the monastery of the Pantanassa, see below Theotokos Pantanassa in Appendix 02, 353-355.

⁷⁹ See below ch. V.3.c - Indices from the Pantanassa, 292

⁸⁰ "La pierre d'autel a disparu. L'inscription a été copiée par Fourmont. La copie originale est au folio 93V du suppl. gr. 855 (n°235)" see Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 137-8.

⁸¹ In particular see Manoles Chatzedakes, 'Classicisme et tendances populaires au XIVe siècle. Recherches sur l'évolution du style', in *IVe Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines, Bucarest, Septembre 1971*, vol. Acte I (Bucarest: Éditions de l'Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 1971), 153-88; Thalia Gouma-Peterson, 'Manuel and John Phokas and Artistic Personality in Late Byzantine Painting', *Gesta* 22, no. 2 (1983): 159-70; Mouriki, 'The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting'.

between the visual and formal solutions adopted in Mystras and those of Crete, recognizing, in some of the cases in Mystras, a sort of ‘over emphasis and mannerism’.⁸² Mouriki in particular highlights how certain distinctive elements in the frescoes of the Pantanassa, while being a response to Constantinopolitan models, also present variations of classic and late antique factors, such as the children portrayed in the Entry into Jerusalem (Fig. 188A-C), the mask motif in the pendentive of the cupola in the upper gallery (Fig. 235) or the vase in the Annunciation (Fig. 186, Fig. 191). Mouriki suggests that the painters in the Pantanassa ‘[...] adapted, in an eclectic way, iconographic features and stylistic devices from [...] earlier decorations of Mystras, [...] showing their independence vis-à-vis their models’.⁸³

In the case of the frescoes of the Pantanassa, I would argue that the strategy of adapting ‘in an eclectic way’ models and standards from earlier visual traditions was determined by an innovative approach to referencing visual exempla taken from local antique repertoire found near Mystras, and specifically Sparta.⁸⁴

⁸² Gouma-Peterson, ‘Manuel and John Phokas and Artistic Personality in Late Byzantine Painting’, 169.

⁸³ Mouriki, ‘The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting’, 219-20.

⁸⁴ The complex issue of Byzantine visual and cultural borrowings from antiquity has been the object of many and important studies. For an introductory bibliography, see Mouriki, ‘Revival Themes with Elements of Daily Life in Two Palaeologan Frescoes Depicting the Baptism’, 458 n. 2. See also Saradi, ‘The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments’; Papalexandrou, ‘The Architectural Layering of History, Memory, and Fragments of the Past’. In general on the relation with the classical tradition, see Roger Scott and Margaret Mullett, eds., *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, 1979* (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 1981); Hélène Saradi, *Aspects of the Classical Tradition in Byzantium* (Toronto: sn, 1995); Zweder von Martels and Victor M. Schmidt, eds., *Antiquity Renewed: Late Classical and Early Modern Themes*, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change ; v. 4 (Leuven, Netherlands ; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003).

IV.3.a Visual antiquarian references

In order to analyse this specific point, I will consider a portion of the frescoes in the upper galleries of the Pantanassa, and in particular some of the iconographic solutions employed to illustrate one of the scenes from the cycle of the feasts (Fig. 46, Fig. 186, Fig. 188A-E, Fig. 191 – Fig. 193, Fig. 236 – Fig. 238, Fig. 300, Fig. 302, Table 35 Fig. 63A-B, Table 35 Fig. 64B, Table 36 Fig. 65).

The volume of the west and east upper galleries constitutes the central transversal axis of the church. The relevance of this vaulted surface is reinforced by the subjects chosen for their decorations. Four of the main scenes of the cycle of the feasts — the Annunciation (Fig. 186; Table 35), the Nativity (Fig. 236; Table 35), the Resurrection of Lazarus (Fig. 46; Table 36) and the Transfiguration (Fig. 237) — are depicted in the four half vaults.⁸⁵

The Annunciation and the Nativity form a cleverly conceived unity on the barrel vault covering the west upper gallery (Fig. 238), occupying the south and the north portion of the vault. The scene of the Annunciation takes place in an open-air courtyard, enclosed by a wall appearing in the background (Fig. 186, Fig. 191, Fig. 239A-D). On the lower section of the wall are two narrow, tall, rectangular windows, framed by three columns rising in front of them and detached from the wall. The three columns support the end of three beams, in turn supported, on one side, by the yellow wall. On top of the three beams is a long architrave that supports three smaller columns, which hold up a horizontal architrave with two architraves jutting

⁸⁵ For a description of the fresco cycles in the Pantanassa, see below Theotokos Pantanassa in Appendix 02, 353-355. For the general programme, see Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pls. 21-8.

out, supported — on the ends facing the viewer — by two other columns rising from a lower architrave (Table 13). Pillars built in front of the three columns of the loggia support the lower architrave. The configuration of the courtyard is very similar to a patrician, late antique Roman civil architecture in an urban context, as suggested by the cityscapes visible on the left and right of the fresco.

This architectural backdrop developed from iconographic solutions adopted in earlier examples of the Annunciation in the Byzantine context (Fig. 240).⁸⁶ However, within that Byzantine convention, it confronts the typically Western iconographic issue of portraying a character of domesticity and of *hortus conclusus*,⁸⁷ just as Fra Angelico did in the Annunciation ca. 1440-5 (Fig. 241) in the north corridor of the San Marco Convent in Florence,⁸⁸ where Phrangopoulos, the patron of the Pantanassa, spent some time.⁸⁹ The architectural rendering in the Annunciation of the Pantanassa of the free standing columns in front of a wall and of superposed columns (Fig. 191, Fig. 239A-D, Table 13), made of quality marbles, remind us of late antique monumental walls decorating public spaces in relevant cities, one example out of the many possible ones is the wall closing Nerva's Forum in Rome (Fig. 242A-B).

⁸⁶ On the iconography of the Annunciation, see in general Hélène Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XIe au XVe siècle: l'Annonciation* (Venise: Institut hellénique d'études byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise, 2007). See also in general Maria Vassilaki, ed., *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, 1st ed. (Milano; New York: Skira, 2000); Maria Vassilaki, *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2005), esp. pp. 23, 27, 33, 103, 104, 123, 130, 155, 158, 159, 175-9, 184, 185, 188, 189, 285.

⁸⁷ On the *hortus conclusus*, see in general Peter Murray, Linda Murray, and Tom Devonshire Jones, 'Hortus Conclusus', *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁸ Laurence B. Kanter, *Fra Angelico* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 184-5 and 184 fig. 106. On Fra Angelico frescoes in the San Marco convent in Florence, see in general William Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Dino Dini and Giorgio Bonsanti, 'Fra Angelico e gli affreschi nel convento di San Marco (ca. 1441-50)', in *Tecnica e stile: Esempi di pittura murale del rinascimento italiani*, vol. I (Milano: Silvana, 1986), 17-24.

⁸⁹ On Phrangopoulos see below ch. V.3.c - Indices from the Pantanassa, esp. 290-293.

A fountain painted in the centre of the courtyard reinforces this late antique setting (Fig. 243). It consists of a lower, square basin, from which a small pilaster emerges, sustaining another smaller, circular basin. From this second basin, another small pilaster emerges terminating in a bud-like shape, from which four sprouts jet out water into the circular basin. This water centred composition reminds us of an aristocratic Roman *domus* setting, supplied with an *impluvium*/fountain system connected to the main city aqueducts. This water theme is significant in the whole fresco composition. It not only reminds us of a domestic context, but also of Hellenistic and late Roman *nymphaea* and monumental fountains, whose design show elements of theatrical architecture: in late Antiquity *nymphaea* and theatres shared several design elements such as long colonnaded façades, over imposed orders of columns arranged in tabernacles and squared or circular niches, decorated with architraves bearing inscriptions and statues.⁹⁰

Often designed as monumental façade in public spaces, sometimes these fountains were adjacent to theatres, as sets to provide and perform water for the public. In general their designs came in two different kinds both related to the *scaenae frons* of a theatre: the first kind of design showed a rectilinear façade divided into three niches with *aediculae*, trabeation, with or without tympana, and arranged on two or three levels – exempla can be found in Leptis Magna (Fig. 244), Mileto, Side and the *Septizodium* in Rome (Fig. 245 - Fig. 247);⁹¹ the second kind of façade had a big

⁹⁰ For a reconsideration and a survey of the literature on monumental fountains in the Eastern Mediterranean, see Julian Richard, 'Where Do We Go Now? The Archaeology of Monumental Fountains in the Roman and Early Byzantine East', in *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium*, ed. Brooke Shilling and Paul Stephenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 15–35.

⁹¹ On the *Septizodium* in Rome and its reconstruction, see Wolfram Letzner, *Römische Brunnen und Nymphaea in der westlichen Reichshälfte*, Charybdis; Bd. 2 (Münster: Lit, 1990), esp. 459-61;

central exedra sided by rectilinear wings – exempla are the *nymphaea* in Leptis Magna, Gerasa, or the Mostra dell'Acqua Giulia in Rome (Fig. 248, Fig. 249). The first kind, the rectilinear *nymphaeum*, can be found in nearby Sparta (Table 14).⁹² The *nymphaeum* is located near the ancient theatre and might have been built during the middle or later decades of the second century CE. Similar rectilinear *nymphaea* were located all around the Peloponnese; two of them, the Peirene and the Glaukè fountains were still visible in Corinth (Table 14).⁹³

Based on the standard Byzantine iconographic tradition of representing the interior of a building in front of its exterior, the fresco of the Annunciation then represents in the background the façade of a Roman/late Antique *nymphaeum* connected to the main water supply of the city, an aqueduct, rendered schematically as a long horizontal red structure, supported by pillars, running parallel to the back yellow wall and in the foreground an interior of a domus, or an interior courtyard associated with the *nymphaeum*, or a small urban fountain, as the one in the mosaic of the Annunciation of St Anne in the Chora, but definitely not the Annunciation at the well, also in the Chora (Table 15A).⁹⁴

Charmaine Gorrie, 'The Septizodium of Septimius Severus Revisited : The Monument in Its Historical and Urban Context', *Latomus* 60, no. 3 (2001): 653–70; Susann S. Lusnia, 'Urban Planning and Sculptural Display in Severan Rome: Reconstructing the Septizodium and Its Role in Dynastic Politics', *American Journal of Archaeology* 108, no. 4 (2004): 517–44; Brenda Longfellow, *Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage: Form, Meaning, and Ideology in Monumental Fountain Complexes* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 164–72.

⁹² On the *nymphaeum* in the proximity of the theatre of the Sparta, see G. B. Waywell and J. J. Wilkes, 'Excavations at the Ancient Theatre of Sparta 1995-1998: Preliminary Report', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 94 (1999): 437–55, esp. 438–53 and pls 51, 55 and 60. On another *nymphaeum* in the acropolis of Sparta, see G. B. Waywell and J. J. Wilkes, 'Excavations at Sparta: The Roman Stoa, 1988-91 Part 2', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 89 (1994): 377–432, esp. 386.

⁹³ On the Corinth water displays, see in general Bert Hodge Hill, 'The Springs: Peirene, Sacred Spring, Glauke. Illustration Plates', *Corinth* 1, no. 6 (1964): 4–33; Betsey A. Robinson, 'Playing in the Sun: Hydraulic Architecture and Water Displays in Imperial Corinth', *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 82, no. 2 (2013): 341–84.

⁹⁴ On the Annunciation to St Anne in the Chora, see Jaqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne, 'Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin', in *The Kariye Djami: Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and*

In the remaining part of this chapter I demonstrate that the artists who painted the fresco of the Annunciation in the Pantanassa reproduced, as setting for the Annunciation, not just simply a generic Roman setting, but more specifically a *nymphaeum* supplied by water coming from the aqueduct (Table 15A).

IV.3.b Historical links between fresco in Mystras and the antiquities in Sparta

It is possible to introduce a new hypothesis for the reading of the backdrop of the fresco in the Pantanassa. The hypothesis regards an actual source of inspiration for the rendering of the architectural backdrop in the scene of the Annunciation, obtained by cross-referencing evidence associated with the presence of Ciriaco d'Ancona in Mystras in the thirties and forties of the fifteenth century. The specific inspiration can be identified with antiquarian and archaeological findings from the area of the Roman theatre of Sparta (Fig. 250).

The theatre is on the slopes of the acropolis, and was restored in Hellenistic times (Fig. 251). It was excavated by the British School in Athens over the course of various campaigns during the twentieth century.⁹⁵ The site is composed of a *cavea*, a

Its Intellectual Background (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 161–94, esp. 168–9. A comparative model for the fountain in the Annunciation to the Theotokos in Mystras is the fountain in the eleventh/twelfth-century mosaic Annunciation to St Anne in the narthex of church of the Dormition in Daphni, see Lafontaine-Dosogne, fig. 7; Doula Mouriki, 'Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34/35 (1980): 77–124, esp. 96–7 and fig. 33. For a recent study on the mosaic of Daphni, see Robin Cormack, 'Viewing the Mosaics of Monasteries of Hosios Loukas, Daphni and the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello', in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass* (London: The British Museum, 2013), 242–53.

⁹⁵ Most recent studies on the theatre of Sparta and its excavations are in G. B. Waywell, J. J. Wilkes, and S. E. C. Walker, 'The Ancient Theatre at Sparta', *British School at Athens Studies* 4 (1998): 97–111; William G. Cavanagh and S. E. C. Walker, eds., *Sparta in Laconia: Proceedings of the 19th British Museum Classical Colloquium Held with the British School at Athens and King's and University Colleges, London 6–8 December 1995* (London: British School at Athens, 1998); Waywell

recognizable structure for the *scaenae*, and, to the west of the *scaenae* along the walls of the *cavea*, a *nymphaeum* (Fig. 252). The excavations have also revealed the presence of various typologies of columns, suggesting that the *scaenae frons* of the theatre had superimposed orders of columns (Table 16, Table 17).⁹⁶

Of particular interest is the capital with waterleaves found in the excavations (Table 18). In fact, several such examples can be found in the archaeological site, and some of the capitals in the Metropolis of Mystras might have originated from the theatre in Sparta. During a recent survey conducted for this research in April 2015,⁹⁷ one of the capitals was measured, and shown to have dimensions that are comparable with the ones of capital “D” employed in the Metropolis (Fig. 215A-C, Table 19, Table 24 Fig. 12C). Analogous dimensions, and, despite the degradation of the capital in the archaeological site of the theatre, similar material and decoration, suggest that the capital with similar dimensions to the one in the theatre (Fig. 215A-C) originates from the same site. Similar Corinthian capitals of the “waterleaves” or *Blattkelch*, or “Tower of the Winds” type, can be found both in the area of the ancient theatre of Sparta and in the archaeological park in Mystras (Table 19).⁹⁸

and Wilkes, ‘Excavations at the Ancient Theatre of Sparta 1995-1998’. On the acropolis and its early Christian basilica, see in general Rebecca Sweetman and Evi Katsara, ‘The Acropolis Basilica Project, Sparta: A Preliminary Report for the 2000 Season’, *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 97 (2002): 429–468; Rebecca Sweetman, ‘The Acropolis Basilica Church, Sparta: The Broader Research Issues’, *British School at Athens Studies* 16 (2009): 331–341; Rebecca Sweetman, ‘The Christianization of the Peloponnese: The Topography and Function of Late Antique Churches’, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 3, no. 2 (2010): 203–61.

⁹⁶ Waywell, Wilkes, and Walker, ‘The Ancient Theatre at Sparta’, esp. 103-11.

⁹⁷ See Appendix 03, 358-361

⁹⁸ On this kind of capitals see here above footnote nn. 35-36

During the Byzantine period, the theatre was abandoned and parts of the architecture were incorporated in the Byzantine defence walls of the Acropolis (Table 20).⁹⁹ The relevant question is whether those who painted the fresco in Mystras might have seen these architectural elements (Table 13). The fresco dates to the thirties or forties of the fifteenth century,¹⁰⁰ and during these years Ciriaco d'Ancona visited Mystras twice, in 1437 (Fig. 170) and 1447.¹⁰¹ Can his visits help prove that the ruins were still visible at that time?

In the thirties, during his first visit to Laconia, Ciriaco reported that, after reaching Mystras and seeing the Despot Theodore, he visited the antiquities of Sparta, the *vestigia*, epistyles, statues, and columns (Fig. 170D-E).¹⁰² In particular, Ciriaco described his visit to the gymnasium of Sparta. On 24 September 1437, Ciriaco wrote: 'we arrived at the famous city of Lacedaemon of the Spartans, which is three miles away from the hill, where nowadays the so called Spartans reside. At the top of the hill is built the city of Mizythras [...]. Here we saw the reigning Despot Theodore Palaiologus Porphyrogenitus. Subsequently the day after we descended to the plain, and we saw the vestiges of the great city, remarkable statues, marble columns, and architraves, collapsed through the fields in antiquity. [...] We saw the scaenae of the

⁹⁹ See A. M. Woodward and Margaret B. Hobling, 'Excavations at Sparta, 1924-25', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 26 (1926): 116–310, esp. 137-9.

¹⁰⁰ See discussion on the construction of the church below ch. V.3.c - Indices from the Pantanassa, 288-304. Also for the post dating of the Pantanassa after 1428, previously believed to be the *terminus ante quem* for its construction and decoration, see Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists'.

¹⁰¹ For the biography of Ciriaco d'Ancona see above ch.III.6 - Ciriaco d'Ancona and the elephant on the page, esp. 183-184. On his travels to Greece and the Peloponnese see in general Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*; d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*; d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Life and Early Travels*; Chatzidakis, *Ciriaco d'Ancona und die Entdeckung Griechenlands im 15 Jahrhundert*. In particular on the 1437 visit to Mystras see Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*, esp. 45-9 and pl. VI. On the second visit to Mystras in 1447, see d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*, 298-303.

¹⁰² d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvrniam*, XXXVII-VIII.

Gymnasium still recognizable in most parts, extraordinary, and of polished marble, [here] many marble bases of statues were inspected'.¹⁰³

But when referring to the Spartan *gymnasium*, Ciriaco was not referring to a generic place for athletic activities. He was actually referring to the theatre of Sparta.

Because he had read and studied both Plutarch's *Moralia*,¹⁰⁴ and Herodotus's *Histories*, he was well aware that the theatre of Sparta was not used for drama but often for *Gymnopaidia* gymnastic festival, celebrated at Sparta by bands of boys and men.¹⁰⁵ So when Ciriaco talked of the *scaenae* of the *gymnasium* in his diary, he was referring to the theatre *scaenae frons* (Table 16-Table 18).¹⁰⁶

The 1995 excavation of the theatre of Sparta, conducted by the British School at Athens, revealed that a *scaenae frons* was added to the theatre during its last

¹⁰³ '[...] ad insigne Spartanorum Lacedaemonumque Urbem venimus, quam contra distans ad III. mil. collis, qui dicebatur Spartanus in hodiernum ab incolis habitatur. Cuius in vertice conditam Ciuitatem Mizythratem ab aliqua situs, & nominis conformitate dixere. In qua Theodorum Palaeologum Porphyrogenitum Despotem regnantem vidimus. At & postquam die postero ad planiciem descendimus, vidimus amplissimae Ciuitatis vestigia, Statuas insignes, marmoreas columnas, & epistylia, hincinde per agros longa antiquitate collapsa. Sed quae magis ingentia inter & ornatissima Urbis aedificia adnotari placuit. Vidimus adhuc magna ex parte cognibilem, egregiam, & polito marmore Gymnasiorum scenam, cuiusce non paucae conspiciuntur statuarum marmoreae bases. E quibus haec quae potui Epigrammata Graeca descripsi.' in d'Ancona, XXXVII. It is important to notice that Ciriaco distinguishes in his writings between generic visual accounts of a monument when he uses the verb *video*, to see, from a closer and more accurate inspection when he uses to verb *conspicio*, to look at attentively.

¹⁰⁴ On Ciriaco's knowledge of the *Moralia* by Plutarch see above ch. III.6 - Ciriaco d'Ancona and the elephant on the page, esp. 190 n. 127.

¹⁰⁵ "When it was the time of the *Gymnopaidia*, Leotychides, now king in his place, saw him in the audience and, as a joke and an insult, sent a messenger to him to ask what it was like to hold office after being king", in Herodotus, *Herodotus: The Histories: New Translation, Selections, Backgrounds, Commentaries*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1992), 6.67.2. 'The principal references to the Spartan theatre in ancient authorities are in Pausanias III. xiv. I, Athenaeus iv. I39 e, Herod. vi. 67, and Lucian *Anack*. 38. Pausanias says that it was built of white marble, and the other three mention various festivals held in it :-the *gymnopaidiai*, the boys' ball-game, and a procession which formed part of the Hyacinthia. From these passages it would appear that dramatic representations were not among the most important spectacles shown in the theatre', in R. C. Bosanquet et al., 'Laconia: II. Excavations at Sparta, 1906', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 12 (1905): 277-479, 395.

¹⁰⁶ For a survey and a reconstruction of the *scaenae frons* of Sparta's theatre see Waywell, Wilkes, and Walker, 'The Ancient Theatre at Sparta', figs. 9.18, 9.30-3.

construction phase dating to the first century CE.¹⁰⁷ This phase, named “Corinthian”, added to the stage wall ‘three pairs of projecting columns, and a row of twelve columns’.¹⁰⁸ The excavation revealed that ‘[t]he central piers would then be occupied by fluted shafts of Pentelic marble, surmounted by Corinthian capitals of Pentelic marble of outstanding quality (A 151, fig. 9.31) [for fig. 9.31 see (Table 17)]. Along the stage wall were unfluted shafts of Laconian marble (A 302, 309), with Corinthian capitals (A 140, 668) and white marble bases (A 148) set on rectangular plinths (fig. 9.32) [for fig. 9.32 see (Table 17)]. These last capitals have rounded sepals matching in form the *acanthus mollis* used in the smaller Pergamene capitals (A 141, 143, 146-7) [for these capitals see (Table 19)] which surely adorned part, at least, of the upper order’.¹⁰⁹

I believe this *scaenae frons* is the one Ciriaco might have seen during his visit to the ruins of Sparta. In order to demonstrate this hypothesis I will refer to a second, indirect evidence that relates to Ciriaco’s visit to Sparta of 1437. This indirect testimony comes from the codex *Vat. Lat. 4424*, in which the Florentine architect Giuliano da Sangallo (c. 1445 - 1516) and his son Francesco (1494 - 1576) collect drawings documenting exemplary buildings and antiquities.¹¹⁰ Also known as *Libro dei Disegni*, now at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, the codex is a collection of

¹⁰⁷ See Waywell, Wilkes, and Walker, 108-11.

¹⁰⁸ On this phase of the Sparta’s theatre see Waywell, Wilkes, and Walker, 108-11.

¹⁰⁹ In Waywell, Wilkes, and Walker, 111.

¹¹⁰ The secondary literature on the codex *Vat. Lat. 4424* includes Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reproduzto in fototipia)*, vols. I-II; Beverly Louise Brown and Diana E. E. Kleiner, ‘Giuliano Da Sangallo’s Drawings after Ciriaco d’Ancona: Transformations of Greek and Roman Antiquities in Athens’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 42, no. 4 (1983): 321–35; Sabine Frommel, ‘I disegni di Giuliano da Sangallo: relazioni tra studio dell’antico e progettazione’, *Opvs incertvm* 5 (2010): 12–27; Donetti, ‘Le “Antichità greche” di Giuliano da Sangallo: erudizione e rovinismo nel Libro dei Disegni, Codice Barberiniano Latino 4424’; Sabine Frommel, *Giuliano da Sangallo* (Firenze: Edifir, Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 2014), esp. 82-6; Bianca de Divitiis, ‘Giuliano Da Sangallo in the Kingdom of Naples. Architecture and Cultural Exchange’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 74, no. 2 (2015): 152–178.

architectural drawings of 66 pages. It measures 45 x 39 cm and it is made of five parchment gatherings.¹¹¹ The third gathering collects drawings of central plan buildings and it starts with two *folia*, 28 and 29, surveying Ancient Greek buildings from Athens, sites in the Peloponnese, and Sparta.¹¹² Both *folia* bear drawing by Giuliano da Sangallo and annotations in Latin and Greek by an unidentified copyist (Fig. 185A-B).¹¹³ These drawings were copied from the diaries compiled by Ciriaco d'Ancona during his trip to the Peloponnese.¹¹⁴ The diaries are now lost and we know of their existence through copies and printed editions that circulated during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹¹⁵

In one of the drawings on folio 29r (Fig. 185A-B), we see the representation of three superimposed orders of twin-fluted columns topped by Corinthian capitals and architraves with Greek inscriptions. Along the twinned order we also see a marble bust, which has been identified with the bust of Dionysus placed over the monument to Thrasillos in Athens.¹¹⁶ The attribution of the bust is based both on iconographic

¹¹¹ For the anastatic edition of the codex see Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reproduzto in fototipia)*, vol. I.

¹¹² The two *folia* 28 and 29 are described in Hülsen, vol. II, 39-45.

¹¹³ For a recent study on the drawings and accompanying inscriptions at folia 28 and 29 of the codex *Vat. Lat. 4424* see Donetti, 'Le "Antichità greche" di Giuliano da Sangallo: erudizione e rovinismo nel Libro dei Disegni, Codice Barberiniano Latino 4424'.

¹¹⁴ On the identification of the drawings by Giuliano da Sangallo with the ones by Ciriaco d'Ancona, see Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reproduzto in fototipia)*, vol. I, XXIX. Also 'It has long been acknowledged that four pages in Giuliano da Sangallo's sketchbook, Codex Vaticanus Barberinus latinus 4424, fols. 28r-29v, were based on the notebooks of Ciriaco d'Ancona', in Brown and Kleiner, 'Giuliano Da Sangallo's Drawings after Ciriaco d'Ancona', 321. For a bibliography on the studies on Sangallo's drawings at fols. 28r-29v in the Codex Vaticanus Barberinus latinus 4424, their sources and connections with the now lost Ciriaco's diaries see Brown and Kleiner, 321 n. 1.

¹¹⁵ In two occasions Ciriaco d'Ancona is known to have travelled to the Peloponnese. On both travels Ciriaco visited Sparta and Mystras and kept diaries of the visits. For the first travel in 1437 see Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*, 45-9. A selection of the first diary was printed in d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Liburniam*. The manuscript of Ciriaco's diary of his second visit in 1447 to the Peloponnese is at fols. 101-124 in the manuscript Troiti 373, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milano, see d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*, 298-303.

¹¹⁶ The identification is in Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reproduzto in fototipia)*, 43.

analysis as on the inscription, which Giuliano transcribed from Ciriaco's transcription, also surveyed by Stewart and Revett in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁷

To reinforce the origin of the objects depicted, above the drawing of columns and of the architrave, there is a writing in Latin (Fig. 185B), probably by a copyist working for Sangallo,¹¹⁸ that states that what is seen in the drawings is to be found "in Lacedemonia", Sparta. The fragments of architrave that were represented by Giuliano da Sangallo also have an inscription in Greek (Fig. 185B).¹¹⁹ While the inscription is known, it is not identified, as its elements are too generic to allow for precise ordering and interpretation. What can be surmised is a generic dedication to the gods and a reference to the city of Sparta. Clearly it is not referring to the Athenian bust of Dionysus. However, while as a whole the inscription does not give us relevant information, there is one revealing detail.

On the second fragment, the median one in Sangallo's drawing (Table 21), a name is given: IOYA – ΑΓΗΣΙΑΟΣ, *Ioul Agesiaos*, or Julo Agesiaos. During my visit to the theatre of Sparta of April 2015, I identified this name in Sparta's theatre (Table 21). On the east wall delimiting the cavea, a stone block bears a long inscription with the name Julo Agesilaos. Allowing for the corruption of the name due to a double

¹¹⁷ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated by James Stuart F.R.S. and F.S.A. and Nicholas Revett Painters and Architects*. ... (London: printed by John · Haberkorn, 1762), vol. II ch. IV pls. I-III.

¹¹⁸ Donetti, 'Le "Antichità greche" di Giuliano da Sangallo: erudizione e rovinismo nel Libro dei Disegni, Codice Barberiniano Latino 4424', 89.

¹¹⁹ The inscription reads 'TEKNΩΝ - ΘΕΟΙΣ - ΣΕΒΑΣΤΟΙΣ / ΚΑΙ - ΤΗ - ΛΑΚΕΔ - ΑΙΜΟΝ - / ΟΥ - ΚΑΙ - ΙΟΥΛ - ΑΓΗΣΙΑΟΣ / ΚΑΙ - [Α] ΦΛ - Α' ΓΗΣΙΑ / ΚΑΛΛΙΣΤΟΝΕΙΚΑΣ / ΓΩ - ΕΚΤΩΝ - ΙΔΙΩΝ - ΑΝΕΘΗΚΑΝ', see Hülsen, *Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo (codice vaticano Barberiniano latino 4424 reproduced in fototipia)*, f. 29r. The inscription is transcribed and discussed in August Boeckh, *Corpus inscriptionum graecarum*, vol. I (Berolini: Ex Officina Academica, 1828), pars IV, sect. III, 641 n. 1298.

transcription – first by Ciriaco and then by Sangallo – and the consequently missing “lambda” from the Sangallo’s drawing, it seems likely that the name in the inscription, shown in Sangallo’s drawing, is probably the one seen in Sparta epigraphy.¹²⁰

In conclusion, we can state with some degree of confidence, that Sangallo’s copy of Ciriaco’s drawing is from a structure that comes from Sparta, likely associated with the architecture of the theatre that Ciriaco saw and that he drew in his diary along with the accompanying inscription, also copied by Sangallo.

This hypothesis is further confirmed if we look at the integration of acropolis fortress-wall, which archaeologists have dated to a generic Byzantine era, and the architecture of the theatre itself (Table 20A-B).¹²¹ This wall had been documented by Michel Fourmont who travelled across Greece documenting inscriptions and collecting manuscripts on behalf of Louis XV, and who visited the Acropolis of Sparta in the twenties of the eighteenth century (Fig. 253, Fig. 254).¹²² His manuscripts and drawings surveying Sparta are found today in the manuscript *Supplément Grec 856* at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.¹²³ At f. 95 of the *Supplément Grec 856*, there are unpublished drawings showing schematically the

¹²⁰ We know from archaeological findings and excavations that in the early second Century CE, in Sparta there was indeed a magistrate named Julo Agesilaos. See Woodward and Hobling, ‘Excavations at Sparta, 1924-25’, 161.

¹²¹ On the Byzantine fortress-wall of the Sparta’s acropolis see Woodward and Hobling, 138 and pl. XIV.

¹²² See Michel Fourmont, *Tabulæ geographicæ ad M. Fourmont iter græcum spectantes*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, *Supplément grec 856*, f. 95 (around 1720s). On Fourmont see above ch. I.3 - Existing scholarship on Mystras’ cultural production, esp. 48. n. 152. Also see Susan Bracken, *Collecting East and West* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 19 n. 7.

¹²³ See above p. 48.nn. 153-154.

cavea of the theatre and the boundary walls of the acropolis that include the scene of the theatre of Sparta (Fig. 254).

David Le Roy in his *Les Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* included a similar view of the Spartan theatre (Fig. 255).¹²⁴ Here, we can see that the corner of the wall that Fourmont shows in his drawing is also shown in the plate by David Le Roy, one in which we also see cylindrical portions of columns close to a wall next to the city which are not visible today. On the other hand, archaeological excavations near the Byzantine wall have shown an architrave with an inscription demonstrating that along the wall of the acropolis there must have been free standing columns with an inscribed architrave (Table 20).

These findings from the theatre, the visual documentation by Fourmont and Le Roy can be compared with the fluted twin columns, the Corinthian capitals and the inscribed architrave of Sangallo's drawing (Fig. 185A-B). It is difficult to relate directly Sangallo's rendering to the excavation, but, based on the inscription of the wall of the cavea and on the correspondence between the drawn columns and those found in the excavation, we can assume one of two things: either when Ciriaco visited the theatre, the columns were still free standing; or they had collapsed, but he provided a reconstruction in his drawings, then copied by Sangallo.

Therefore, it is plausible to think that the architectural scene in the background of the Annunciation found a model in the fifteenth-century remains of the *scaenae frons*

¹²⁴ David Le Roy, *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grece: ouvrage divisé en deux parties, où l'on considere, dans la premiere, ces monuments du côté de l'histoire; et dans la seconde, du côté de l'architecture* (Paris: Chez H. L. Guérin & L. F. Delatour, 1758), [2e édition, 1770], Vol. II, pl XIII.

and of the architecture of the theatre of Sparta, which served both as monumental Roman antiquity, hence providing an actual first-century model for the scene of the Annunciation, and, because of the presence of the *nymphaeum*, as a commentary to the water-related iconographic repertoire of the Virgin.

IV.3.c The antique is a form of antiquarianism that transfers knowledge

The particular choice of using an antique visual iconographic repertoire to frame the scene of the Annunciation in the Pantanassa (Fig. 186, Fig. 191), described up to now, also corresponds to a specific form of antiquarianism that conveys religious content via a visual medium borrowed from antiquity. I suggest that this visual, antiquarian quotation strategy also determines the way in which the fountain in the foreground of the scene is depicted (Fig. 243). In order to do so we need to consider other pictorial details.

The Theotokos is portrayed seated on the right side of the fresco, while the archangel Gabriel is entering the scene from the left (Fig. 186). From the top, directly above the Theotokos, a ray pierces through the heavens through a circular aperture (Fig. 238). The ray then divides itself in three smaller rays, the central one of which descends onto the Theotokos. This circular aperture is introduced as a variation of the traditional iconographic theme of the semi-circular aperture usually employed to represent the act of the descent of the Holy Ghost through the sky onto the scene (Fig. 240).¹²⁵ The light springing from the central circle unites the scene of the Annunciation and of the Nativity.

¹²⁵ Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XIe au XVe siècle*, figs. 13, 16, 18, 26, 54, 55, 57.

The descent of the Holy Ghost is integral to the visual rendition of the Annunciation, and the event is described in most textual sources on the life of the Theotokos.¹²⁶ The medium through which the Holy Ghost is made visible can vary in form.¹²⁷ Here the light emanates (ἀπόρροια) from God, through the Holy Ghost, to the Theotokos, and from her to the world as Mother of the Son of God. The Theotokos is, in a sense, the terrestrial source of the divine light, she is the πηγὴ τοῦ φωτός, the Earthly spring of the light of God.¹²⁸ The Theotokos as spring of light is reinforced by the careful rendition of the Archangel's tunic, which is shown translucent and reflective due to the light reflected by the body of the Theotokos (Fig. 186, Fig. 191). The yellow and red colourations of the Archangel's tunic match the tones used for the yellow wall and the red columns, also illuminated by the light reflecting from the Theotokos' body.¹²⁹

I suggest that the presence in the scene of the fountain/spring (Fig. 243) relates to this role of the Theotokos, rather than to the cult of Zoodochos Pege, the Theotokos as the 'Life-giving Spring'.¹³⁰ This spring does not relate to the iconographic type of the Zoodochos Pege, the cult of which went through a great revival during the

¹²⁶ The mention to the descending of the Holy Ghost on the Theotokos can be found in Luc 1, 35; Protoevangelium X, I-XI.3; the Gospel of the Nativity IX, 4; Psudo-Matthew IX; the Armenina Gospel ch. V. 9.

¹²⁷ For a detailed analysis of the different forms of visual rendering of the Holy Ghost, see Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantin et occidental du XIe au XVe siècle*, 77-84.

¹²⁸ See Gregor. Thaumaturgus Neocaesarensis, Homilia in annuntionem BMV I, PG 10, col. 1152B; Methodius Olympius, Sermo de Symeone et Anna 14, PG 18, col. 381B.

¹²⁹ The motive of the Theotokos as the spring of light in the Pantanassa becomes a very important iconographic motif in the rendition of the Annunciation. The rendition of light in this fresco can also be put in relation to the debate on light in the hesychast movement of the late period. For the influence of Hesychasm in Religious iconography, see Ivan Drpić, 'Art, Hesychasm, and Visual Exegesis: Parisinus Graecus 1242 Revisited', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 62 (2008): 217-47, esp. 218 n. 8.

¹³⁰ Alice-Mary Talbot and Scott Fitzgerald discuss the Zoodochos Pege as 'Life-Receiving Spring', see Alice-Mary Maffry Talbot and Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, *Miracle Tales from Byzantium* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), xiv.

Palaiologan period.¹³¹ The iconography of the Zoodochos Pege by the late Byzantine period is well established. It shows the Theotokos with child portrayed on the top basin of a fountain, from which water comes out, thus appearing to originate from the Theotokos. This iconography features in Mystras in the Hodegetria narthex (Fig. 256),¹³² and in the south funerary chapel in Hagioi Theodoroi (Table 39 Fig. 78).¹³³ While the iconography of the Zoodochos Pege in the Orthodox context has had diverse formulations,¹³⁴ the one employed in Mystras, according to Rhodiniki Etzeoglou, originated in Constantinople at the end of the fourteenth century. At the beginning of the fifteenth century this specific iconography was transferred to Mystras by the patrons who commissioned its depiction in the narthex of the Hodegetria and in the chapel of the Hagioi Theodoroi.¹³⁵

In the Annunciation of the Pantanassa, the artists chose not to use the iconography of the Zoodochos Pege. Rather, they employed an iconography taken from other models, which I believe relate, as in the case of the architectural backdrop to the scene, to antique models, which in turn relate to other iconographic types portraying water springs. The iconography employed for the fountain relates to water features that can be found in an aristocratic Roman domus, a private setting where a private

¹³¹ For an analysis of the developments of the iconography of the Zoodochos Pege see Etzeoglou, 'Quelques remarques sur les portraits figurés dans les églises de Mistra'; Etzeoglou, 'The Cult of the Virgin Zoodochos Pege at Mistra'; Natalia Teteriatnikov, 'The Image of the Virgin Zoodochos Pege: Two Questions Concerning Its Origin', in *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* (Aldershot England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 225–38; Henry Maguire, 'Where Did the Waters of Paradise Go after Iconoclasm?', in *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium*, ed. Brooke Shilling and Paul Stephenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 229–45, esp. 236–42. On the cult of the Zoodochos Pege in the late period, see Talbot and Johnson, *Miracle Tales from Byzantium*, p. xvii. Also here see a recent translation of the 'Anonymous Miracles of the Pege', [translated by Alice-Mary Talbot], in Talbot and Johnson, pp. 203–97.

¹³² See Etzeoglou, 'The Cult of the Virgin Zoodochos Pege at Mistra'.

¹³³ See Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 90. 2.

¹³⁴ For a general discussion on the evolution and different versions of the iconography of the Zoodochos Pege, see Δημήτριος Ι. Πάλλας, 'Η Θεοτόκος Ζωοδόχος Πηγή. Εικονογραφική ανάλυση και Ιστορία του Θέματος', *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* 26 (1971): 201–24.

¹³⁵ See Etzeoglou, 'The Cult of the Virgin Zoodochos Pege at Mistra', esp. 245.

fountain can be connected to an *impluvium* system or to the main city aqueduct. An iconography similar to the one found in the fresco in Mystras is also elaborated in the iconographic renderings of the Spring of Life or the Spring of Eternal Youth in fifteenth-century Italian humanistic circles. This iconography is used earlier in the context of the Annunciation, as seen for example in the thirteenth-century fresco of the Annunciation at Prüll Charterhouse (Regensburg) (Fig. 257A-B), where a vase and a fountain feature as is the case in the Pantanassa fresco. However there are many examples from the fifteenth century: the Spring of Life or the Spring of Eternal Youth of the fifteenth-century *deschi da parto* – one example is the fountain depicted on the *desco da parto* with the scene of Ameto's Discovery of the Nymphs by the Master of 1416 (Fig. 258A-B)¹³⁶; or in visual allegories of the Spring of the Muses in the Helicon mountain, as seen in the “Ballo delle Muse” in the manuscript *Urb. Lat.* 899 in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, second half of the fifteenth century (Fig. 259); or the Spring of the Muses found on the reverse of the ca. 1446 bronze medal of Guarino da Verona by Matteo de Pasti (Fig. 260A-B). In particular, the fountain in the medal by Guarino da Verona has a similar conformation to the one of the Pantanassa, with a circular basin that collects water coming from a bud-like shape positioned on top of a pillar (Fig. 243).

The latter is particularly important. Guarino da Verona studied Greek from 1403 to 1408 in Constantinople with Manuel Chrysoloras,¹³⁷ a proficient translator, close to

¹³⁶ Ameto's Discovery of the Nymphs, Master of 1416, ca. 1410, Tempera on wood, dimensions: Twelve-sided, 21 1/8 x 22 1/8 in. (53.7 x 56.2 cm), Rogers Fund, 1926, accession n.: 26.287.2, MET

¹³⁷ See Leone, 'A Brief "History of the Morea" as Seen through the Eyes of an Emperor-Rhetorician. Manuel II Palaiologos's Funeral Oration for Theodore, Despot of Morea', p. 397, 397 n. 1. See also Giuseppe Cammelli, *Demetrio Calcondila*, vol. III, I dotti bizantini e le origini dell'Umanesimo (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1954), esp. pp. 131-39.

Manuel II Palaiologos and an ambassador to the Italian courts.¹³⁸ Guarino lived in Venice, then in Florence 1410-1414 where he taught Greek and was probably a student of Manuel Chrysoloras. His writings had an effect on the artistic debates in Italy.¹³⁹ From 1429 Guarino became the Greek tutor of Leonello D'Este at the court of Ferrara, where the council was to take place, and he was part of the group of intellectuals that promoted the study of Greek and Latin. As evidence of his connections, we know Manuel II Palaiologos sent him the funerary oration in honour of his brother Theodore I Palaiologos, which suggests they were also in touch.¹⁴⁰ One of the few autographed manuscripts of Manuel Chrysoloras (Metedora, Metamorph. 154) also contains a funerary eulogy in memory of Theodore I Palaiologos. Chrysoloras was close to Manuel II, as he was his de facto ambassador to Italy, so at a minimum this triangle testifies a common literary and intellectual exchange. This is the same group of intellectuals, who are interested in the classical tradition, and of which Ciriaco d'Ancona is also a member. I believe this evidence suggest a connection of the cultural milieu of Mystras with that of Italian humanism — a connection probably not coincidental given the Italian origin of the spouses of the despots of Mystras at this time, from the Acciaiuoli and Malatesti families. In the case of the Pantanassa, the scene of the Annunciation makes reference to a series of different antiquarian themes: a Hellenistic late Roman nymphaeum, the water feature of a Roman domus, or early exempla of the iconographic motif of the Spring of Life such as the one painted in the Roman catacomb of Via Latina, or the one portrayed in mosaics at Galla Placidia (Table 15B). While these are elements belonging to a

¹³⁸ Peter Mack, *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric, 1380-1620* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 'Italy 1390-1480', pp. 33-55.

¹³⁹ Michael Baxandall, 'Guarino, Pisanello and Manuel Chrysoloras', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 183-204.

¹⁴⁰ Leone, 'A Brief "History of the Morea" as Seen through the Eyes of an Emperor-Rhetorician. Manuel II Palaiologos's Funeral Oration for Theodore, Despot of Morea'.

Byzantine tradition, the details of the scene also participate to a broader antiquarian debate that at the beginning of the fifteenth was developing in Morea's neighbouring polities.

IV.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, the visual culture in Mystras in the late Palaiologan period develops a repertoire, which cites artistic and visual materials from antiquity, in the same way that literature might cite antique authors. This chapter has identified specific links between the iconography of the fresco and real structures found in Sparta, as evidence of a direct sourcing of materials and ideas. I have also suggested that in contextualizing the Annunciation scene with an emphasis on water, instead of opting for the iconography of the Zoodochos Pege, the patrons who commissioned the fresco requested their artists to elaborate an original iconographic typology able to transmit the attributes of Source/Spring of Life associated with the cult of the Virgin. This was achieved by a carefully rendered antiquarian visual repertoire merging the late Antique nymphaeum/aqueduct motif of the backdrop with the early Christian iconography of the Spring of Life.

As an informed observer, Ciriaco documented in Sparta evidence relevant to his antiquarian/architectural interests, and, while documenting them, reconstructed them, satisfying both his interests and those of the patrons and the authors of the frescoes in the church of the Pantanassa, a church and an artistic endeavour that speak of the visual antiquarian cultural interests of Mystras during the late Palaiologan period. As part of a chain of agent-patient relationships Ciriaco is at the same time an agent, an

index and a patient within the discourse and the interest on visual antiquarianism, both in Mystras and in the Italian courts he interacted with. The analysis of the indices of these relations provide a better understanding of the art and the agency at the court of Mystras, allowing to complement and better understand also the impact of the Latin *basilissai*.

V Secondary agency in the built environment

V.1 Mystras as a political project

In the introduction, we have seen how Mystras' development was intertwined with the broader geopolitics of the Peloponnese, dynastic alliances established by the Byzantine Empire, and economic developments across the Mediterranean. In this section, we explore in greater detail the political and economic project that provided the basis for the development of Mystras, to help us, in the rest of the chapter, identify indices of the agency of the Latin *basilissai* in that context.

There are three important objectives that stood behind the establishment of Mystras as the capital of the Despotate. First, the desire to establish a defensible centre of authority, from which to administer the resources of the state and its related institutions. Second, to capture in some measure the economic benefits of a capital city, with a mixture of trade and production. And third, to establish the city as a cultural centre, signalling cultural proximity to the dominant forces in the Mediterranean and particularly Venice. The presence of the Latin *basilissai* in Mystras was directly or indirectly instrumental in the accomplishment of all three objectives.

V.1.a Mystras as a political centre

First, the issue of territorial and political control. As we saw in the introduction, the Byzantines took back control of part of the Peloponnese in 1262, with the Treaty of

Constantinople.¹ After a short period during which the governor was based in Monembasia – the only port city the Byzantines had on the Peloponnese – the administrative centre of Morea moved to Mystras. The reason was principally strategic: continued conflict in the region meant that a defensible centre was important. Mystras was probably more defensible than a port, and certainly gave quicker access to the rest of the Peloponnese by land.

After the Fourth Crusade, urban centres of the Peloponnese went through a process of appropriation and re-urbanization, but, even though the Byzantines subsequently took back many parts of the Peloponnese, most of the existing cities and settlements in the region did not provide a secure basis for administration. In most cases, the Byzantines had to negotiate their rulership with foreign forces until the Ottoman conquest. Cities such as, Corinth, Nauplion, Sparta, Monembasia and Patras were active urban centres before falling under crusaders' control, and remained so whether they were reconquered by the Byzantines after 1262 or became independent from the Byzantine Empire (Fig. 1).² Monembasia, for example, was briefly lost to the Ottomans in 1394, then taken back before the end of that same year thanks to Venetian help, but was never exclusively controlled by the Palaiologoi.³ Other

¹ On the Treaty of Constantinople and the consequences in Morea, see Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, esp. Vol. I, 15-25.

² On the war between the Byzantines and the Latin rulers in the Peloponnese, see Zakythenos, esp. Vol. I, 25-75. The studies on the Fourth Crusade and its consequences in the former areas of the Byzantine Empire include Jacoby, 'The Encounter of Two Societies'; Benjamin Arbel, Bernard Hamilton, and David Jacoby, eds., *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (London: Frank Cass and The Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, The Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, 1989); Ortalli, Ravegnani, and Schreiner, *Quarta crociata*; David Jacoby, 'After the Fourth Crusade: The Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Frankish States', in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500-1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 759–78; Sharon Gerstel, ed., *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013).

³ The city of Monembasia is particularly interesting in terms of the several changes of control that it went through between the middle of the thirteenth to 1460 when the city went under the protection of Pope Pius II. For a recent brief account on the history of Monembasia, its history and an updated

centres such as Methone and Korone were given to Venice after 1204 and remained Venetian until the Ottoman conquest. Patras was taken over by the crusaders and, from 1267, was controlled by the Latin Archbishop, although, from 1424 to 1430, that was Cleophe's brother Pandolfo. Patras developed mostly under Venetian influence until Constantine took it back in 1430, only to lose it again to the Ottomans in 1460. Nauplion, after having resisted the crusaders until 1212, was never controlled again by the Byzantines. Kalamata was briefly taken back by the Byzantines in 1428, but was essentially contested between the Byzantines and the Ottomans after that.

Mystras, on the other hand, offered a sensible option. It was a fortress on high ground, which provided an ideal positioning from which to exercise power over the territory. On the top of the steep hill the fortress was designed as a self-sufficient unit with defensive, residential, religious and storage facilities;⁴ the despot's palace was built on a lower section but connected to the fortress via defensive infrastructure, whereas the monasteries were organized in a lower part of the city closest to the city district and to the metropolitan church, which already existed when the city became capital of Morea (Fig. 2). The areas in between these three main sections developed organically.⁵

bibliography, see Jonathan Shea, 'The Late Byzantine City: Social, Economic and Institutional Profile' (University of Birmingham, School of Historical Studies, Centre for Byzantine Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, 2010), 38–42.

⁴ On the fortress of Mystras, see Andrews, *Castles of the Morea*, 159–82; Γεωργία Μαρίνου, 'Το φράγκικο κάστρο της κορυφής', in *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά. Το Έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Ταμείο Διαχείρισης Πιστώσεων για την Εκτέλεση Αρχαιολογικών Έργων, 2009), 80–88.

⁵ Charalambos Bouras, 'City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture', in *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Wien, 4. - 9. Oktober 1981. Akten*, vol. I.2 (Wien: ÖAW, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 611–53, esp. 631–32; Kalopissi-Verti, 'Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement', 2013, esp. 227.

In founding the city, the Byzantine elites employed overlapping design practices, originating from urban experiences attested in areas that were previously Byzantine and, by then, had been conquered by foreign forces.⁶ Mystras was built in a relatively short period of time and mostly under the direction of a political entity, the Despotate, which was in itself newly established in the region. These factors – the short time of its development, and the nature of the project that guided its rulership – were important in defining Mystras' built environment.⁷ In Mystras the places of political direction and those of religious uses were mixed in the urban texture, and put in relation to each other on the basis of their relative power. The rational and clear organization of the city was allowed by its new foundation, as had been the case for Andravida, Glarentza and Chlemoutsi, where not having to negotiate with pre-existing buildings allowed for a systematic approach in the design of cities and settlements.⁸ This could not occur in cities such as Corinth, Athens, Thessaloniki, Sparta, Monembasia, or Arta, where pre-existing urban fabric forced compromise in the overall design.

Mystras' design and infrastructure responded to its function as a capital. This was not unique to Mystras. For example, in the case of Trebizond, after 1204, an independent imperial court remodelled the pre-existing city, which already had some imperial elements to accommodate the rituals and processions expected of an imperial capital: the palace as an imperial residence, the cathedral of the Panagia Chrysoskephalos for official coronations, processional structures linked to the construction of the church

⁶ Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), esp. 582-83; Bouras, 'Byzantine Cities in Greece', esp. 67-73; Kalopissi-Verti, 'Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement', 2013.

⁷ Kalopissi-Verti, 'Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement', 2013.

⁸ Demetrios Athanasoulis, 'The Triangle of Power: Building Projects in the Metropolitan Area of the Crusader Principality of the Morea', in *Viewing of Morea. Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 111-51.

of Hagia Sophia outside of the citadel, and the *tzykanisterion*, the imperial polo field.⁹

Similarly, by the time of the foundation of Mystras as capital, the rulers of Morea must have been aware of the model provided by Thessaloniki. Founded in antiquity, in the middle of the fourteenth century Thessaloniki developed mostly around the area of the castles built by Andronikos III Palaiologos in 1341.¹⁰ At that time, the city occupied the same walled area it had in antiquity. This late antique built perimeter determined the urban standards and structures.¹¹ The Heptapyrgion and the citadel around it were built on the north side of the city, on the highest point overlooking the Roman and late antique defensive system.¹² The city was then transformed, reinforced, and saw architectural and artistic commissions during the rule and residency of members of the Palaiologan dynasty, such as Andronikos II Palaiologos, Empress Anna of Savoy, Andronikos III Palaiologos, and Manuel II Palaiologos.¹³

Mystras finds a close parallel with the development of Thessaloniki. Manuel Kantakouzenos' plan started from the Frankish castle of Villehardouin. A defensive infrastructure was built around the castle, in the portion of the hill immediately below it. By embracing part of the hill, the city walls were designed in conjunction with the area and the buildings constituting the despotic palace. The latter began its development in the fourteenth century by incorporating a pre-existing tower,

⁹ Antony Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), esp. 47-60.

¹⁰ Charalambos Bakirtzis, 'The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 37.

¹¹ Bakirtzis, 40.

¹² Bakirtzis, 'The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike', esp. 39-47.

¹³ Anastasia Tourta, 'Thessalonike', in *Heaven & Earth. Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece*, ed. Jenny Albani and Eugenia Chalkia, II vols (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), II, 75-93, esp. 87-93.

probably of Frankish origin.¹⁴ These sections were clearly differentiated and organized inside the city's perimeter using the city walls and the natural orography of the site with a high degree of consideration for the different functions the city was to perform (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).¹⁵ Not only the first conception of the castle of Villehardouin, but also the design of the despot's palace, found inspiration in the overall layout and distribution of rulers' palaces of Frankish and Western tradition. In particular, the presence of a large courtyard in front of the despot's palace, can be read as an unusual feature of Mystras, derived from 'contemporary Italian cities',¹⁶ as we shall discuss below.

The elites responsible for the design were also referring to the urban experience of capital cities like Arta, in the Despotate of Epiros, the design of which, while characterized by a Byzantine matrix, was developed under the influence of the Italian despots that resided there, families such as the Orsini, Buondelmonti and Tocco.¹⁷ The principal part of the city of Arta is its castle, which served as the headquarters of the Despots of Epiros. Analogous to Mystras, in Arta the power was organized around the fortified acropolis.

Mystras function as capital was supported by the fact that it also controlled land that could be farmed, providing some degree of autonomy. According to Sphrantzes, during the Despotates of Theodore I, Theodore II, and Constantine Palaiologos, the

¹⁴ Σίνοϋ, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, 339-42.

¹⁵ Σίνοϋ, esp. 337-73.

¹⁶ Bouras, 'Byzantine Cities in Greece', 67.

¹⁷ Barbara Papadopoulou, *Byzantine Arta and Its Monuments* (Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, Publications Department, 2007); Barbara Papadopoulou, 'Arta', in *Heaven and Earth: Cities and Countryside in Byzantine Greece*, ed. Jenny Albani and Eugenia Chalkia, vol. II, II vols (Athens: Benaki Museum; Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2013), 126-39.

Byzantine army continued to come and go from and to Mystras, using it as a base from which to attempt to recapture the rest of the Peloponnese. These efforts would continue during all the fourteenth and part of the fifteenth century, and in fights with the Venetians, Franks, Genoese, and Ottomans they took back large tracts of the region.

V.1.b Mystras as an economic centre

The second aspect of Mystras' project as capital city, was its role as an economic and administrative centre. Despite the ambitions of the Despotate, we know that Mystras, like many Byzantine cities, had a limited population: In the fourteenth century between five thousand and ten thousand people lived there.¹⁸ If the surrounding area of Mystras is taken into account estimates suggest the population might have reached 20,000.¹⁹ By contrast a city like Thessaloniki would have been around 40,000 inhabitants and only Constantinople reached more than 100,000 people.²⁰ And yet, despite the relatively small population, throughout this dissertation we refer to Mystras as a city, because, by adopting cultural approaches not dissimilar to those of contemporary urban sociologists, we recognize it as an entity with social structure and a specific culture, not just as 'the physical construction that its dwellers inhabit, but as the sum of their own customs, habits, and mental states'.²¹

¹⁸ Kalopissi-Verti, 'Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement', 2013, esp. 227 and 239 n.10; Matschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', esp. 464.

¹⁹ Χαράλαμπος Μπούρας, 'Η πόλη του Μυστρά', in *Η κοσμική μεσαιωνική αρχιτεκτονική στα Βαλκάνια, 1300-1500*, ed. Slobodan Ćurčić and Ευαγγελία Χατζητρύφωνος (Θεσσαλονίκη: Αίμος, 1997), 76–79, esp. 76.

²⁰ Matschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', 465.

²¹ Scott Spector, 'Forum: Ideas and the City Introduction', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 2 (2013): 259–66, esp. 259.

Mystras was not just the centre of power, it was also an administrative centre and one where the resources of the region around it were concentrated. It was a market for luxury items, provided storage for a number of commodities, needed in times of crises or to supply local demand. Coinage would have also been mostly concentrated in the city.²² Mystras' administrative and economic role also placed it at the intersection of international trade. Productive activities that supported the city included silk weaving and construction.²³ Raw silk was exported from Morea into the fifteenth century, and was the source of significant tax revenue,²⁴ while in the broader Despotate there was significant agricultural activity, including viticulture and olive oil production. Plethon himself had suggested taking advantage of the domestic production of local textiles like wool, linen and cotton over imports.²⁵ Related to textile production, for example, were dyeing agents such as the kermes and acorn cups. Kermes, which the Greeks called *prinokokki* and the Latins called *grana*, colours textiles vermillion. It was obtained from a parasite, collected from the holly oak found all around the Peloponnese, and its collection was very labour intensive. In 1342 the authorities in Mystras committed in writing to selling kermes along the production of acorn cups to Venetian traders, from which we know that the state was likely a monopolist, sole buyer and seller of these goods.²⁶

In Mystras, in all likelihood the centralization of resources, treasury functions, and commercial activities was not just played by the despot's administration, as the

²² Matschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', 466.

²³ Matschke, 491. For a broader review of rural economy in the Peloponnese, see Jacoby, 'Rural Exploitation and Market Economy in the Late Medieval Peloponnese'.

²⁴ Angelike E. Laiou, 'The Agrarian Economy, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', in *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, vol. I, III vols (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2002), 305-69, esp. 323 and 323 n. 69.

²⁵ Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea', esp. 429.

²⁶ Jacoby, 'Rural Exploitation and Market Economy in the Late Medieval Peloponnese', esp. 263-64.

major monasteries, such as the Brontocheion monastery, and the metropolitan church also had agricultural activities and *paroikoi* endowed to them.²⁷ The earnings associated with all these assets must have been administered by these institutions in Mystras, and their buildings as well as the urban design of the city would have reflected this commercial and administrative vocation, with storage for goods, markets and stables.²⁸

For cities with a development that reaches back into late antiquity, the distribution of commercial premises and urban spaces is the result of layering over time. For example, Marlia Mundell Mango engages with the question of what determined the commercial map of Constantinople in the early and middle period. Its geographical setting of course contributed to its development, a sea-bound city on seven hills.²⁹ Some of the locations of the city maintained their function, such as the Strategion, which was a hub for commercial activity from its time as an early Greek colony to modern times. Commercial establishments, *fora*, *horrea*, *macella*, *stoai* are known from excavations. The geographic concentration of commercial establishments in areas of the city, comparable to the Roman Emporium, are clear and that concentration according to Mango continued into the middle period, both for markets for food and non-food goods.³⁰ Similar concentration of these types of functions would have been found in most late antique cities.³¹

²⁷ On the endowments and privileges of the Brontocheion monastery, see Gerstel, 'Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village. Ecclesiastical and Rural Landscape in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese', esp. 337-48. On the Metropolis, see Gerstel, esp. 348-52.

²⁸ Matschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', 465.

²⁹ Marlia Mundell Mango, 'The Commercial Map of Constantinople', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000): 189-207, esp. 189.

³⁰ Mango, esp. 201.

³¹ Mango, esp. 191.

The porticoes, colonnaded streets which housed commercial premises, were another feature that, it seems, survived in early and middle Constantinople and must have therefore been a familiar feature of at least some Byzantine urban space.³² The porticos are mentioned all the way into the thirteenth century, and in fact in the case of Constantinople are mentioned in accounts of the fire that broke out during the Latin siege of the city.³³ A well-known mid-thirteenth century fresco at Arta — the procession of the icon of the Virgin Hodegetria in Constantinople, which is on the west wall of the narthex of the *katholikon* of the Blacherna Monastery in Arta (Fig. 261), — shows the procession of Hodegetria icon, and provides an insight into the commercial setting of the Constantinopolitan market near the square of the Hodegon Monastery.³⁴ The fresco illustrates the trade that was conducted in a medieval forum in Constantinople at the time of the procession. In the background we can see the arcades overlooking the public square. Those arcades are not the *stoai* that had persisted since the time of Constantine, but are nevertheless commercial premises on a square. Over the course of the fourteenth century, the transition to greater concentration of commerce, where Venetians, Genoese and Pisans settled further shaped the city.³⁵

In the case of Mystras, by contrast, the commercial development happened over a relatively short period of time, and was the response to the capital project of the Despotate. This is also evident from the correspondence between the despot and

³² Mango, esp. 203-04.

³³ Thomas F. Madden, 'The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople. 1203-1204: A Damage Assessment', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84, no. 1 (92 1991): 72-93.

³⁴ Maria G. Parani, "'The Joy of the Most Holy Mother of God the Hodegetria the One in Constantinople': Revisiting the Famous Representation at Blacherna Monastery, Arta", in *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 113-45, esp. 113, 118-9.

³⁵ Mango, 'The Commercial Map of Constantinople', esp. 205.

Bessarion and from Plethon's two memoranda. Bessarion, fresh from his travels to Italy, provided a number of suggestions on the necessary technological innovations, especially the water mill, to support a productive manufacturing economy, and the importance of the dying industry, as a competitor to Venice.³⁶ Plethon provided a number of suggestions for the organization of society and the economy.³⁷

V.1.c Mystras as a cultural centre

The third dimension of Mystras was that of a cultural centre, as we have explored during the course of this dissertation. From the moment of installation of the Despotate in Mystras, Mystras became cultural centre, attracting intellectuals as well as aristocrats fleeing from the hardships caused by the plague, sieges and conflicts. From the time of John VI Kantakouzenos, when he escaped the plague of 1361, to the time when Plethon established his school, the intellectual life of the city thrived.³⁸ Kydones describes how the city's cultural value was enhanced by its proximity to Sparta, which gave it an additional allure in the Hellenizing eyes of Byzantine intellectuals.³⁹

It is the interaction of these three roles of the city – political, economic and cultural – that provides the context for indexing the Latin *basilissai*'s agencies. The close interaction between the development of Mystras, imperial plans for the region, and the broader geopolitical context played out in the administration of the city and

³⁶ Alex G. Keller, 'A Byzantine Admirer of "Western" Progress: Cardinal Bessarion', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11, no. 3 (1955): 343–48, esp. 347.

³⁷ Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea', esp. 423–29.

³⁸ Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, esp. Vol. II, 320–37.

³⁹ Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon*, esp. 83–6; Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea', esp. 435–44.

reverberated through the web of relations connecting the different polities, establishing agency relationships that could be seen in indices in both Venice and Mystras.⁴⁰

For example, in the early fifteenth century, Emperor Manuel II was trying to reconstruct the Hexamilion, the great six mile wall which was supposed to close the isthmus of Corinth, preventing arrivals via land to the Peloponnese, essentially transforming the Morea in an island. The reconstruction of this wall was completed in 25 days,⁴¹ so fast that the Venetians apparently congratulated the emperor. But when asked for financial support for it, they were reluctant to provide it.

The emperor already had a significant outstanding debt to Venice by the middle of the fourteenth century. Nicol refers to about 17,163 *hyperpera* and the figure of 30,000 ducats, with interest since 1343. The financial commitments that linked the Empire to the Venetians tied directly to the administrative role of Mystras.⁴² The money to build the wall had been raised from an increase in taxation on Greeks, who, as a result, had fled to Venetian territory. Having acquired Venetian citizenship, Greeks Moreotes needed to a domicile in Venice. Theresa Shawcross relates the presence of these merchants to the palaces in Fondamenta dei Mori in Venice, reading the statues that are inserted in the palaces today, such as those next to the Tintoretto Palace, as testimony of merchants who lived between Venice and the

⁴⁰ Morphological urban connection between Mystras and Italian towns has been previously suggested by Hans Buchwald, see Hans Buchwald, 'Byzantine Town Planning - Does It Exist?', in *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400-1453)*, ed. Michael Grünbart (Wien: ÖAW, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 57–74, esp. 67.

⁴¹ Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. 353-54.

⁴² Nicol, 355. For an evaluation of the Byzantine debt to the Venetians, see below footnote n. 64 page 264.

Morea.⁴³ The Venetians offered to send those Greeks back, but they were not willing to contribute hard cash.⁴⁴ Collecting tax must have therefore been one of the central preoccupations of the emperor. The Greeks who had become Venetian citizens, engaged in trading activity in Morea must have paid taxes to the emperor on those trades, so there must have been tax collection concentrated in Mystras.

The interest Venice had in the area is also clearly expressed in official deliberations by the Venice Senate on matters concerning Morea, now collected in the *Registri Senato* series *Secreti* and *Misti* at the Venice National Archive.⁴⁵ Even though these documents are not the primary sources for this study, it is worth pointing out that the political and economic agenda of the Venice Republic in the affairs of Morea recurs frequently in many of these deliberations. For example, a deliberation of the Venice Senate on 11 June 1418 reports a request by the Senate to the despot of Morea asking him to intervene in favour of Venetian creditors, waiting to be repaid by their Greek debtors residing in the Despotate of Mystras.⁴⁶ Amongst these deliberations, one in particular summarizes this political agenda (Fig. 262-Fig. 263).⁴⁷ On 7 January 1420, in response to Nicolas de Monoïanni, Byzantine Ambassador in Venice, the Senate made clear a few things: first, the Republic would ask the Venetians living in Constantinople to be obedient to the emperor; second, the tax on consumption of wine, affecting Venetian merchants, should be abolished; third, the Republic

⁴³ Shawcross, 'A New Lykourgos for a New Sparta: George Gemistos Plethon and the Despotate of the Morea', esp. 431-32.

⁴⁴ Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 1992, esp. 354 n. 1.

⁴⁵ Partial transcriptions of these primary sources can be found in Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des Croisades au XVe siècle*. Also in Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie t. 2. 1400-1430*.

⁴⁶ The deliberation is in *Senato, Deliberazioni, Misti*, Registro 52, ff. 95v – 97 – ASVn. The deliberation is summarised in French in Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie t. 2. 1400-1430*, 164-5.

⁴⁷ The deliberation is in *Senato, Deliberazioni, Segreti*, Registro 7, 129 r/v – ASVn. The deliberation is summarised in French in Thiriet, II:178. as well as in Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des Croisades au XVe siècle.*, vols I, 300–1.

accepted Byzantine suggestions regarding the peace with Sigismund king of Hungary; fourth and most relevant to our argument, the Republic gladly accepted the proposition of Despot Theodore I to sort out the Greco-Venetian borders in Morea.

The interactions between the Empire and the Venice Republic as described in these documents were complex and required a detailed understanding of how Italian merchants operated not only in Constantinople, but also in other parts of the empire. In particular for the last request, the Latin text states ‘in some parts of the Morea his [of the despot] lands are mixed with ours, and ours with his, [...] so that [for] our own good the borders of the parts can be worked out’.⁴⁸ This final passage refers to sections of the Byzantine Morea that were mixed with Venetian ones, and requests that they be identified properly in order to protect and better manage Venetian enclaves in the Despotate territory and vice-versa. This is an affirmation of the fluidity of the geo-political boundaries in the area, as well as a demonstration of the continuity and coexistence of Venetians and Byzantine enclaves, a coexistence that anticipated the one of Turkish, Greek and Latin communities that would be later observed by Venetian accounts of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

In the next sections, we will examine specific elements of the urban environment of Mystras, which responded to the economic, political and cultural nature of the imperial project we just described, and that reveal the presence of the Latin *basilissai*. As we shall see, the typology of the city that Byzantine rulers developed, especially after 1349, when the urban centre became the capital of the Despotate of Morea, was at the forefront of urban planning for the time, revealing a complex

⁴⁸ ‘cum in partibus Amoree Loca sua sunt mixta cum nostris, et nostra cum suis, [...] quo nostro bene possunt operandi confinia partium’, in *Senato, Deliberazioni, Segreti, Registro 7*, 129v – ASVn.

urban design which showed elements incorporated from several traditions and an interpretation of design solutions reflective of a complex environment and, particularly, the Latin *basilissai* as diplomatic agents.

In almost all cases, the agency of specific individuals is embedded in complex chains that make it difficult, in the absence of direct documentary evidence, to pinpoint primary agency. But a combination of formal analysis and comparison, alongside historical considerations, allow us to at least construct a set of possible routes through which agency expressed itself in the observed indices in the architecture and urbanization of the city.

V.2 The Spaces of the Palace as indices

V.2.a The initial development of the palace and indices of Isabelle's agency

Our understanding of the domestic and non-religious architecture of Mystras is certainly problematic. The first study of the non-religious built environment dates to the 1930's, and was based on a campaign conducted by Orlandos.⁴⁹ As noted by Kostis Kourelis, this campaign was conducted with significant methodological omissions: the application of basic stratigraphic and archaeological methods was lacking. As a result, the publication in 1934 of Orlandos' work on the non-religious buildings of Mystras, *The Palaces and Houses of Mystras*, almost amounts to a pamphlet, promoting the Byzantine city as an ideal rooted in early- twentieth-century Greek nationalism. In much writing about the city, Mystras never matured beyond its Orlandian inception, as pointed out by Kourelis: 'The site's theatrical transformation

⁴⁹ Αναστάσιος Κ. Ορλάνδος, 'Τα παλάτια και σπίτια του Μυστρά', *Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν μνημείων τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, no. 3 (1937): 3–114.

into a national shrine turned the houses from a collection of miserable ruins into a sacred stage that could not be violated by the archaeologist's trowel. Hence, Orlandos's perspective remains fossilized despite subsequent attempts to rectify his chronologies.⁵⁰

Stephanos Sinos published the most recent study of this built environment, as a result of the survey and restoration campaign of the monuments of Mystras.⁵¹ Even though he relies, for the most part, on the chronology proposed by Orlandos, Sinos offers additional insights. Despite being impossible to verify independently the chronology, that literature distinguishes four construction phases of the palace area.

In 1262, when Mystras was transferred from William de Villehardouin to the Byzantines, the area immediately below the castle, the esplanade of the current palace, was occupied by a group of buildings, protected by a first fortified wall (Fig. 264). The first phase corresponds to the original nucleus of the palace: a tower in the southeast corner of the palace complex. The other buildings, which were subsequently demolished and no longer exist, occupied the northwest corner. The Frankish tower has a rectangular plan, with approximate dimensions of 6.6m by 20m, extending over three stories (Fig. 264 [part A of the plan], Fig. 265, Fig. 266). It is in poor state and extremely damaged, preserving only the perimeter walls, not in their full height. The building is composed of two volumes: a rectangular one, with approximate dimensions of 6.6m by 15.7m (although the plan is slightly trapezoidal), and a second volume, smaller in plan, taller in height, with dimensions of 6.6m by

⁵⁰ Kostis Kourelis, 'Byzantine Houses and Modern Fictions Domesticating Mystras in 1930s Greece', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 65 and 66 (2011 2012): 302.

⁵¹ Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, 337-73.

4.4m. The room on the ground floor of the larger of these two volumes was covered with a barrel vault, while there seems to have been a frame of wooden beams supporting the floor between the first and second floors. According to Orlandos and Sinos, this tower dates to the Frankish occupation and was the first building of the palace area of Mystras.⁵²

There is no evidence of how this palace developed after the transfer of Mystras to the Byzantines, when the Brontocheion monastery and the metropolitan church were built in the lower part of the city. Sinos suggests a second construction phase, during the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos. Two towers, one with kitchens on the ground floor, and an annexed cistern, were added to the west of the Frankish tower, although not attached to the tower itself, presumably constructed to serve the buildings of the first phase (Fig. 264 [part B of the plan], Fig. 266). The building with the kitchens has dimensions of 6m by 9.3m while the function of the other, dimensions 3.3m by 6m, is unclear. These buildings recall a Byzantine style, according to Sinos. The kitchens are on the ground floor, covered by two semi-spherical domes, with a narrow stairway that led to the first floor. The latter is also covered by two semi-spherical domes. Ducts collected water in the cistern connected to the kitchens. The second building is covered by barrelled vaults. This development suggests that the complex was evolving towards residential use, and the size of the kitchens indicates that they must have been designed with a large number of people in mind.⁵³

In 1349, after Manuel Kantakouzenos was made first despot of Morea, the third construction phase began (Fig. 264 [part Δ of the plan], Fig. 267A-C). The

⁵² Σίνοϋ, esp. 337-39.

⁵³ Σίνοϋ, esp. 339-42.

development occurred to the west of the kitchen. The building is on two floors, significantly larger than the previous buildings, slightly trapezoidal, with approximate dimensions of 13.3m by 18.7m without the portico and terrace. It has the same floor plan on both ground and first floor (Fig. 267B-C). The plan is divided into three parts. A central large room — internal dimensions 5.3m by 12m, — runs across the long side and along the short side of the building, from northeast to southwest. On both sides of this central room there are two smaller ones: a 5.3m by 8m room, twice as large as the other (4m by 5.3m), directly communicating with the central space. The rooms on each side are not arranged symmetrically. On the southeast side, the larger of the two rooms is to the southwest of the smaller one; on the northwest side, the larger room is to the northeast of the smaller one. On the ground floor, along the northeast façade that overlooks the Eurota valley, there is a vaulted portico divided by five pillars, creating six arcades, dimensions 4.7m by 19.3m, slightly exceeding the length of the façade. On the first floor, a long and narrow balcony of the same dimensions, is supported by corbels (Fig. 267A). In the corner between the kitchen and the portico there is a tower with plan dimensions of 4m by 4m.

Stephanos Sinos states that this type of architecture is not present in any other Byzantine medieval building. He relates it instead to the typical planimetric distribution of Venetian domestic architectures of the fourteenth century, such as Ca' Loredan and Ca' Farsetti, which, he says, are only sporadically found in the region and in the post-Byzantine period. According to Sinos, the building was covered by a timber roof with a system of wooden trussed rafters. This architecture is also

different from other domestic buildings preserved in Mystras.⁵⁴ Examples such as the Laskaris or the Phrangopoulos house are elongated rectangular plans, with two or three floors, and a distribution of spaces that is less symmetrical.⁵⁵

The first despot of Morea, Manuel Kantakouzenos, and his wife Isabelle de Lusignan also undertook activities aimed at increasing the nobility of the palace area, by building a church for the palace – Hagia Sophia – as well as a new wing. The adoption of a Venetian architectural solution for the palace at this time would have significant implications for the choices and enabling conditions that the patrons, Manuel and Isabelle, would have had to put in place. Aside from the morphological parallelisms of the plan and the masonry, a Venetian model for the despotic palace following the Venetian practice of using large wooden trusses would have implied the employment of highly specialized skilled workers – *marangoni* – which for a building of this size, would have had to have been in situ. In 2002, a fragment of “terrazzo” flooring technique was revealed in the pavement of the *triklinos* of the Laskaris house.⁵⁶ Being this flooring technique very common in Venice, this might be considered as an index of a building technique practice shared between the workshop responsible for the construction of the Laskaris house and Venetian ones. A similar pavement is found in the palace complex.⁵⁷ While there are no documents that prove that such workmen were sent with this mandate, making proof of intent impossible, there are a number of connections with Venice that can be detected, and

⁵⁴ Σίνος, esp. 342.

⁵⁵ Γεωργία Μαρίνου, ‘Οικιστικά Συγκροτήματα Της Κάτω Πόλης’, in *Τα Μνημεία Του Μυστρά. Το Έργο Της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Ταμείο Διαχείρισης Πιστώσεων για την Εκτέλεση Αρχαιολογικών Έργων, 2009), 246–98.

⁵⁶ Μαρίνου, 255 and 255 fig. 26.

⁵⁷ Stefan Sinos, ‘Organisation und Form des byzantinischen Palastes von Mystras’, *Architectura: Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Baukunst* 17 (1987): 105–28, esp. 122.

which suggest that the building does index a specific chain of agency in this particular choice of architecture.

During the Despotate of Manuel Kantakouzenos, the Byzantine imperial court would have had great familiarity with the Venetian urban landscape. For example, between 1369 and 1371, the Emperor John V Palaiologos visited a number of foreign powers. In Rome, he renewed the five-year treaty with the Republic of Venice, and then travelled to Venice, but, by that time, the cost of his court and the arrears owed to the sailors had depleted his finances to the point that they prevented him from returning home. Stuck in Venice, prey to usurers, he then asked for help from Byzantium, including to Manuel Kantakouzenos, but it was his son Manuel, despot of Thessaloniki, who would eventually come to Venice himself in 1371 and would briefly take his place.⁵⁸

The type of building seen in Mystras is not a form that would be found in public architecture in Venice, such as Palazzo Ducale, but is rather a nobler form of domestic architecture. It developed around the end of the thirteenth century, and in the fourteenth century we know it to be associated with important Venetian families. It is what Venetian documents referred to as Casa Grande, such as Ca' del Papa, Ca' Barozzi, il Fondaco dei Turchi, Ca' Farsetti (Fig. 269) and Ca' Loredan (Fig. 270).⁵⁹ These buildings have a plan with a passing salon perpendicular to the façade on which there is a loggia with portico. While not public architecture, they are certainly notable. For example, Ca' Farsetti belonged to the Dandolo family, whose members

⁵⁸ Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, 'Jean V Paléologue à Venise (1370-1371)', *Revue des études byzantines* 16 (1958): 217–32.

⁵⁹ Juergen Schulz, *Palaces of Medieval Venice* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), esp. 1-4, 23-28. Schulz's study on Venetian Medieval palaces is particularly useful since it provides extensive primary sources.

were Enrico Dandolo (born 1107 – died 1205) — who took part to the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 and was Doge from 1192 to 1205 — Giovanni, Francesco and Andrea Dandolo, Doges of Venice respectively from 1280 to 1289, from 1329 to 1339 and from 1343 to 1354.⁶⁰ This is the typology of buildings that is modelled in the Palace in Mystras at the time of Manuel Kantakouzenos.

Ca' Loredan in particular provides a link to the court of Mystras and Isabelle de Lusignan's family specifically. The first owners of Ca' Loredan were merchants, who had made their money through imports and exports across the Mediterranean.⁶¹ Ca' Loredan was then bought by the three brothers of the Corner family in 1364.⁶² The family was not only actively trading in northern Africa, southern Italy, Greece and Middle East, but was registered in various cities around the Mediterranean. The year after buying Ca' Loredan, they created a huge business, that moved goods between Cyprus, Rhodes, Venice and Genoa valued more than 67 thousands ducats and managed to capitalize in the Autumn convoys of 1365 over 83 thousand ducats.⁶³ For comparison, Ca' Loredan was bought for 650 *libra grossorum*.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ On the Dandolo family and their possessions in Venice, see Juergen Schulz, 'The Houses of the Dandolo: A Family Compound in Medieval Venice', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 52, no. 4 (1993): 391–415.

⁶¹ Schulz, *Palaces of Medieval Venice*, 198 and 198 nn. 49, 50.

⁶² Schulz, 187–88.

⁶³ Schulz, 199–200.

⁶⁴ Schulz, 187. For the period between 1366 and 1391, one Venetian *libra grossorum* corresponded to ten Venetian ducats. See Linda Guzzetti, 'Dowries in Fourteenth-Century Venice', *Renaissance Studies* 16, no. 4 (2002): 430–73, esp. 472. 650 Venetian *libra grossorum* corresponded to roughly 6,500 Venetian ducats. See also Peter Spufford, *Handbook of Medieval Exchange* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1986), 86. In the middle of the fourteenth century, the exchange rate between Venetian ducats and Byzantine hyperpera was approximately 2 to 1. See Spufford, 287. The debt of the Byzantine emperor to Venice in 1343 was of roughly 30,000 ducats, see Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 1992, 355. In the sixties of the fourteenth century, the Corner family had assets that were twice the debt owed by the Byzantines to the Venetians. For a discussion on the wealth and the monetary capacity of European entrepreneurs in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Rembrandt Duits, 'Art, Class and Wealth', in *Viewing Renaissance Art*, ed. Kim W. Woods, Carol M. Richardson, and Angeliki Lymberopoulou (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 21–56, esp. 37–40.

One of the three Corner brothers, Federico, started lending money to a number of families across the Mediterranean. Through that business he befriended a number of princes, including Peter I Lusignan of Cyprus, who was his guest at Ca' Loredan in 1368 during his third visit in Venice, where he also stayed in 1362 when the house was not in the possession of the Corner.⁶⁵ The Corner family was closely associated with Venetian power, and in fact during that time a relation of the three Corner brothers, Marco Corner, was Doge in Venice.⁶⁶ The web of relations brings us also to Mystras, as we know that upon returning from that trip, Peter met Isabelle de Lusignan in Methone in October 1368. The direct connection flowing through Peter I, between the Venetian environment and Byzantine artistic production at the court of Manuel Kantakouzenos, can also be detected in material culture, for example, in the silver gilt and jasper chalice of Manuel Kantakouzenos, now at the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos (Fig. 271). The chalice presents decorative elements such as the handles in the shape of dragons very similar to productions of Venetian workshops, and it has been suggested that this chalice arrived in the Peloponnese with the 1368 trip of Peter I.⁶⁷

The links between the Lusignan and Ca' Loredan continue, and for the king of Cyprus this model of a house was associated with a rich and influential family he was close to. In 1376, Federico Corner stood as proxy in Milan for Peter II, son of Peter I, in his marriage to Valentina Visconti, who two years later while travelling to Cyprus stayed at Ca' Loredan. In turn, Federico's son Piero married Marie D'Enghien, who descended from the Count of Brienne, and whose dowry included

⁶⁵ Schulz, *Palaces of Medieval Venice*, 197 n. 47.

⁶⁶ Schulz, esp. 200.

⁶⁷ Evans, *Byzantium*, esp. 118-19, 118 figs. 5.2a-b.

the towns of Argos and Nauplion in the Peloponnese, which ensured that Piero became Lord of Argos and Nauplion in 1377.⁶⁸ As we saw earlier, this subsequently triggered the conflict between the Venetians and the alliance of the Acciaiuoli and Despot Theodore I.⁶⁹

All of this is historical evidence linking specific individuals connected to Mystras through the family of the Latin *basilissa*. While it cannot prove direct agency it allows us to hypothesize its indexing in the choice of architecture, further corroborating Sinos' idea that the architecture of Mystras reflected Venetian practice. The argument for the agency is stronger however when considering the fourth construction phase and the urbanization surrounding the Palace, which allows us to add a functional interpretation to the choices made in developing the city.

V.2.b The fourth construction phase of the Palace in the Urban context and Bartholomea's and Cleophe's agency

The fourth construction phase is dated during the years of the reign of Manuel II Palaiologos (Fig. 268A-D). The beginning of the periodization coincides with the dating of a few coins found in the excavation of one of the buildings of the fourth phase, a tower that connects the first Frankish phase with the second phase, the kitchens. These Venetian coins, the *torneselli*, date to the period of Doge Michele Steno, between 1400 and 1413.⁷⁰ Aside from the tower, this fourth phase involved the demolition of the Frankish constructions that were in the area northeast of the

⁶⁸ Schulz, *Palaces of Medieval Venice*, esp. 200-01.

⁶⁹ See above I.2.c - The Despotate and the Latin *Basilissai*, 17

⁷⁰ Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, esp. 346.

palace, and the construction, on this site, of a large rectangular structure on three floors, with a great hall of imposing height, of dimensions 36 m by 11.7 m, excluding the portico (Fig. 272, Fig. 273, Fig. 274). The portico itself is 36 m long, as long as the façade of the Palace, and 4m wide. The building is on three floors. A lower ground floor at street level, an upper ground floor accessible from the street with a ramp on one side, and a first floor, which corresponds to the so-called throne room. The lower ground floor has a central axis of pillars and an external portico. The upper ground floor shows a sequence of rectangular long rooms, perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the plan, and has on the façade a portico exactly above the one of the lower ground. The first floor is one large open space, and, on the façade, has a balcony that is exactly above the lower porticos and is completely open.⁷¹ The palace is linked to the palace of the Despot Kantakouzenos and communicates directly with its first floor (Fig. 268B).

The plan and the structure of the palace constructed during the Despotates shows similarities with the Palazzi della Ragione in Padova (Fig. 275A-D, Fig. 276A-D),⁷² and Vicenza (Fig. 277A-C, Fig. 278A-B).⁷³ The examples of Mystras, Padova and Vicenza have in turn a common architectural precursor, both in their plans and in their vertical developments, these buildings reflect the palaces of ecclesiastical authority such as those of the bishops that are found in Italy in places like Parma and Pomposa (Fig. 279A-B).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Σίνοϋς, esp. 340 fig. 6.

⁷² Camillo Semenzato, 'L'architettura del Palazzo', in *Il Palazzo della Ragione di Padova*, ed. Carlo Guido Mor (Venezia: Neri Pozza, 1963), 21–44.

⁷³ Franco Barbieri, *La Basilica palladiana*, vol. II, *Corpus Palladianum* (Vicenza: Centro internazionale di studi di architettura 'Andrea Palladio' di Vicenza, 1968).

⁷⁴ Schulz, *Palaces of Medieval Venice*, esp. 8-10.

The ground floor of the palace in Mystras has narrow and long rooms, perpendicularly placed to the longitudinal axis of the plan. This type of planimetric choice is found in the case of the Palazzo della Ragione of Padova, where the rooms on the ground floor are organized perpendicularly to the axis of the plan as well (Fig. 276A-D). A second similarity is the presence of loggias running parallel to the building on multiple levels on the side overlooking the piazza. The large, rectangular hall, free of any internal columns, and the presence of *ocula* above the windows all are similar traits across these buildings. A similar basic design can be seen in the Palazzo della Ragione in Vicenza, also known as the Basilica Palladiana, before Andrea Palladio's sixteenth-century addition of loggias (Fig. 277A-C).⁷⁵

We do not have precise dating for this construction phase, but as reported by Orlandos, inside this architecture there is an inscription dated 1465, which, despite being during the Ottoman domination, provides a *terminus ante quem* for the building.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, we do not have evidence of the precise years of the realization of this building, but this second temporal bracket tells us that the great hall must have existed in the Palaiologan era.

To extract any evidence of agency, the interpretation of this construction phase is best done within the context of the urban plan surrounding it. The palace area of Mystras occupies a plane enclosed by a defensive system that is partially built and partially natural: it comprises fortification walls on the north and west side and natural slopes, with buildings, on the south and east sides (Fig. 2, Fig. 264, Fig. 272).

Two main accesses gave entrance to the area: the Monembasia gate from the east and

⁷⁵ Donata Battilotti, 'Logge del Palazzo della Ragione', in *Andrea Palladio*, ed. Lionello Puppi (Milano: Electa, 1999), 456–57.

⁷⁶ Ορλάνδος, 'Τα παλάτια και σπίτια του Μυστρά', esp. 77.

the Nauplion gate from the west. A path links the two gates, passing through the centre of the palace complex where there is a large open space. Cities like Mystras, built on hills, had stepped streets, which meant it was hard to transit with wheels.⁷⁷ The fact that the palace was built on a plateau of sorts would have made access to it, and transit around it, much easier. By the fourth construction phase, the palace complex formed an L on the west side of this open area, which is delimited on the other two sides by other buildings closing the space into a square.

This space has been interpreted in recent scholarship as a possible commercial space or market place, or an ‘imitation of the squares of contemporary Italian cities’.⁷⁸ ‘Its function is nevertheless unknown. Perhaps, in imitation of the squares of contemporary Italian cities, it served to display the palaces and for the gathering of citizens, or it might have been a space for an open air market.’⁷⁹ The basis for all these claims is ultimately Orlandos’ original work.⁸⁰ However, observing a survey conducted just before 1700 by Vasieur, we can see how the square was used as a bazaar in the Ottoman period (Fig. 280A-B). Furthermore, on the sides of the square itself, on the sides opposite the L-shaped palace, Vasieur represents buildings that have in front of them columns. Despite the 240 years that have passed, it still recalls the urban design of an Italian piazza with columned porticos on the sides.⁸¹ These could of course be Turkish or Ottoman colonnades, but could also have been in situ, according to a tradition that we recognize in Constantinople. In fact, as discussed

⁷⁷ Charalambos Bouras, ‘Aspects of the Byzantine City, Eighth–Fifteenth Centuries’, in *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, vol. II (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2002), 497–528, esp. 509.

⁷⁸ Kalopissi-Verti, ‘Mistra. A Fortified Late Byzantine Settlement’, 2013, esp. 227.

⁷⁹ Bouras, ‘Byzantine Cities in Greece’, 67.

⁸⁰ Ορλάνδος, ‘Τα παλάτια και σπίτια του Μυστρά’, esp. 13–4.

⁸¹ This resemblance has been already recognized, see Bouras, ‘Aspects of the Byzantine City, Eighth–Fifteenth Centuries’, esp. 512–13.

earlier, the fresco of the Constantinopolitan procession of the Hodegetria icon in the narthex of the *katholikon* of the Blacherna monastery in Arta shows, behind the procession in front of the Hodegon Monastery, a colonnade with porticos and balconies that look down on the square (Fig. 261).⁸²

Outside the Nauplion gate a second open area is enclosed between the city walls, including the gate, and a second defensive structure, which surrounds it to the west. This open space, from what we can see in the Venetian maps of the seventeenth century, is not fully developed (Fig. 280A-B). The Venetians also mention the presence near this second space of a Jewish quarter.⁸³ That there was a Jewish community in that area is not only testified by the map of the Venetians, but is also confirmed in the sixties of the fifteenth century by Sigismondo Malatesti, who, during the siege of Mystras, says that within the citadel some Jews were also finding refuge.⁸⁴ The presence of Jews in an urban context indicates activities of an economic character. This is also found in the Tocco chronicles in Arta, where it is said that some Jews lived in what is defined as the *chora*, the settlement near the walls of the citadel of Arta.⁸⁵ These are all indices of economic activity.

This urban distribution puts at its core the palace but it keeps it connected with the circulation of the city, while protecting it in case of emergency. The palace is perpendicular to the axis connecting the gates of Nauplion and Monembasia, almost acting as a diaphragm between the piazza it creates and the area which separates the

⁸² Parani, “‘The Joy of the Most Holy Mother of God the Hodegetria the One in Constantinople’: Revisiting the Famous Representation at Blacherna Monastery, Arta’, esp. 118-19.

⁸³ On the Jewish community of Mystras, see Steven B. Bowman, ‘The Jewish settlement in Sparta and Mistra’, *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher*, no. 22 (1985): 131–146.

⁸⁴ Soranzo, ‘Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in Morea e le vicende del suo dominio.’, esp. 279-80.

⁸⁵ Shea, ‘The Late Byzantine City: Social, Economic and Institutional Profile’, esp. pp. 171-72.

palace from the gate of Nauplion. Similar solutions are employed in cities under Venetian influence such as Treviso, Padua, and Vicenza, and we know these were well known cities in Mystras, as evidenced by references to them in Chalkokondyles's *Histories*.⁸⁶ In those cities, there are typically two or more squares around palaces like the Palazzo della Ragione, in Padua and Vicenza, and each square serves a different function (Fig. 275D, Fig. 277C). For example, in 1426 in the fourth book of the Statutes of the Comune it is said that around the Palazzo della Ragione in Vicenza one can distinguish three squares: *Platea Magna*, today Piazza dei Signori, the great square, *Platea Bladie*, today Piazza delle Erbe, the square for the grain, *Platea Fructum*, today Piazza delle Frutta, the square for fruits and vegetables. These squares are also pointed out in the map of Vicenza known as Carta del Peronio (1480-81) (Fig. 281).⁸⁷ Piazza dei Signori would have been devoted to public gatherings, while Piazza delle Erbe and Piazza della Frutta would have been the marketplaces.

The urban plan laid out during the Byzantine rule of Morea was clearly recognised in the fifteenth century by Sigismondo Malatesti, and later in the seventeenth century by Coronelli, in both their descriptions of the city, while under siege by the Italian armies guided respectively by the Lord of Rimini in 1464-5 and by the Republic of Venice in 1687.⁸⁸ It is useful to compare this urban layout to that of Thessaloniki, as discussed by Bakirtzis.⁸⁹ In Thessaloniki the squares are not adjacent to a public structure like the palace. The governor's seat in Thessaloniki is in the citadel near the

⁸⁶ Laonikos Chalkonkondyles, *The Histories*, II vols (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2014), 4.28, vol. I 314-15.

⁸⁷ Ettore Motterle, 'Una pianta del Peronio di Vicenza del 1480 ca.', *Bollettino CISA* XIII (1971): 332-48.

⁸⁸ On these two military expeditions to conquer the Morea from the Ottoman, see below V.4.a - Italian observers of Mystras, 304-316

⁸⁹ Bakirtzis, 'The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike'.

Heptapyrgion, while the market places have emerged in the city more haphazardly. There is no mixing of imperial power and use of the city for administrative or transaction reasons. Instead, the approach to urban design seen in Mystras, where the locus of administrative power is central to a road system with the piazza, is characteristic of the Italian late communal towns and early *Signorie*.⁹⁰

This way of organizing the urban space is a way to imitate a context from which both Bartholomea Acciaiuoli and Cleophe Malatesti came. The marketplaces of a city, linked to a symbol of institutional power like the Palace, was an urban innovation that had a time of great expansion in the period between the beginning of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁹¹ In this phase of urban renewal, decorations of the square, such as the colonnades around the piazza with the porticos, begin to develop, and will become the distinctive feature of many Italian cities. Examples are many: the Rialto market in Venice,⁹² the markets of Padova and Vicenza, the piazza of Rimini (Fig. 282).⁹³ At that time, the Republic of Venice, while imposing its authority on smaller cities like Padua, Vicenza and Brescia, used urban and architectural design solutions to host *intra muros*, inside the city walls, both the palaces for exercising its administrative and ruling powers, as well as for providing public spaces for commerce and public gatherings, thus associating these

⁹⁰ Bouras, 'Aspects of the Byzantine City, Eighth–Fifteenth Centuries', esp. 513; Buchwald, 'Byzantine Town Planning - Does It Exist?', esp. 67.

⁹¹ Luca Fontana, 'La città veneta dal 1348 al 1509', in *Lo spazio nelle città venete (1348-1509)*, ed. Enrico Guidoni and Ugo Sorgani (Roma: Edizioni Kappa, 1996), 9–14.

⁹² Donatella Calabi and Paolo Morachiello, *Rialto: le fabbriche e il ponte, 1514-1591* (Torino: Einaudi, 1987).

⁹³ For comparative cases across Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century on how cities manage the relationship between the market square and the square linked to the public authority, see Donatella Calabi, *The Market and the City. Square, Street and Architecture in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2004), esp. 39-94.

spaces with its authority.⁹⁴ In particular a distinctive sign of Venetian urban intervention in cities it governed where the civic/mercantile/representative *loggia*, which were built as freestanding buildings with a ground floor open to the public, multiple floors and porticoes on more than one side, to signal Venetian authority and rulership.⁹⁵ Similarly in Mystras the Despotate designed a complex that, even though not furnished with a Venetian loggia, hosted both the palace for exercising its own rulership as well as the space for commerce and public assembly.

When compared to the piazza of some cities of northern Italy, the palace complex of Mystras shows how the ruling elites of the late Byzantine period in Mystras experimented with preoccupations similar to those found across Europe in the fourteenth century: to provide innovative urban solutions where the power of the Despotate was made visible and tangible both in terms of its imperial prerogative, as well as in terms of providing infrastructure for protecting, gathering and organizing trade.⁹⁶ This is distinct from the cases of the Imperial palaces of Constantinople, both the Great Palace as well as the Blachernai, which were places of power, diplomacy and ritual in the city that were kept separate from trading areas, whose location and structure had been mostly inherited from the late antique past.⁹⁷ These palaces had a defensive nature for the Imperial court and, on special occasions, were equipped with

⁹⁴ Marc Boone and Heleni Porfyriou, 'Markets, Squares, Streets: Urban Spaces, a Tool for Cultural Exchange', in *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 227–53, esp. 229–30.

⁹⁵ On the building typology of the Venetian civic/mercantile *loggia*, see Patricia Fortini Brown, 'The Venetian Loggia: Representation, Exchange, and Identity in Venice's Colonial Empire', in *Viewing Greece: Cultural and Political Agency in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 207–33.

⁹⁶ Calabi, *The Market and the City. Square, Street and Architecture in Early Modern Europe*, esp. 39.

⁹⁷ Paul Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople', in *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), 1–111, esp. 45–6. On the use of the Imperial palace in the late period, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, esp. 367–78.

special outdoor platform built inside the courtyard of the palace to perform the *prokypsis*, a public, yet protected, display of the emperor.⁹⁸

V.2.c The Uses of Space of the Palace at the time of Cleophe and Ciriaco

The general conception of the palace area reflects the needs of a court, which consisted of a significant presence, both permanent and temporary. Along with the despot, the court hosted the offices linked to the execution of its official duties as administrator and defender of the Despotate: the administration of the judicial power, the collection of taxes, the maintenance of diplomatic relations and the commercial activities involving directly the despot. Policy initiatives of the despot, such as the agreement signed with the Republic of Venice for trading valuable dyeing agents at the end of the fourteenth century,⁹⁹ or the tax the despot imposed on the silk trade, imply that the despot had to have the physical capacity to collect, store, tax and dispatch these substances. The court also included the *οἰκεῖοι*, *oikeioi*,¹⁰⁰ members of the imperial family as well as officials and dignitaries, dependent on the office of the despot, along with their families. Besides this group of people, one has to take into consideration the temporary residence at court of Byzantine officials traveling between Mystras and other cities of the Empire, such as Cleophe Malatesti's physician, Demetrios Pepagomenos,¹⁰¹ diplomatic visitors and foreign merchants,

⁹⁸ On the *prokypsis*, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, esp. 369 and 401-11.

⁹⁹ See above page 251.

¹⁰⁰ For a comparative discussion on the *oikeios* in Thessaloniki in the late period, see Nevra Necipoğlu, 'The Aristocracy in Late Byzantine Thessalonike: A Case Study of the City's Archontes (Late 14th and Early 15th Centuries)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003): 133–151, esp. 144, 144 n. 36.

¹⁰¹ Schmalzbauer, 'Eine bisher unedierte Monodie auf Kleope Palaiologina von Demetrios Pepagomenos'.

such as Ciriaco d'Ancona, and the daily presence of members of the court who were residing outside the palace complex, such as Laonikos Chalkokondyles.

One example of the use of the Palace during Palaiologan times comes from the travels of Ciriaco d'Ancona. During his first trip to Greece in 1436, Ciriaco d'Ancona visited Athens. There, he was a guest of Antonello Balduino, in his home on the Acropolis probably near the Erechtheion, a fact we know because Ciriaco mentioned seeing an inscription at the base of a statue close to it from Balduino's home.¹⁰² He went once more in February 1444, and in this second visit he spoke of the Propylaea, which had been incorporated in the Palace of Nerio Acciaiuoli on the Acropolis.¹⁰³ The Acciaiuoli family added a tower to the Frankish palace of the Duke of Athens after 1388.¹⁰⁴

Next to the Palace was the Parthenon, which at the time was used as a church. We have references of both his visits in his diaries, but we also know he produced graphic documentation of the Parthenon. While we do not have his original drawings, the drawing of the front of the Parthenon is copied by the Sangallo workshop, and is included in the codex *Vaticanus Latinus 4424* of Giuliano da Sangallo, discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁰⁵ It has been suggested that these drawings and the Acciaiuoli Palace became models for Sangallo's architecture at the

¹⁰² Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*, 40.

¹⁰³ Bodnar, 52.

¹⁰⁴ For a reconstruction plan of the Frankish palace on the Acropolis hill in Athens, see Edward W. Bodnar, 'Athens in April 1436: Part I', *Archaeology* 23, no. 2 (1970): 96–105, esp. 98. On the Acciaiuoli tower on the Athenian Acropolis, see Peter Lock, 'The Frankish Towers of Central Greece', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 81 (1986): 101–23, esp. 111–2; Peter Lock, 'The Frankish Tower on the Acropolis, Athens: The Photographs of William J. Stillman', *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 82 (1987): 131–33.

¹⁰⁵ See above ch. IV.3.b - Historical links between fresco in Mystras and the antiquities in Sparta, esp. 232–235.

court of the Medici, specifically the Villa Medici at Poggio a Caiano.¹⁰⁶ However, in the diaries of Ciriaco there is no mention of the palace of the Acciaiuoli, which might have therefore appeared to him conventional, and in any case not worth mentioning. Ciriaco's diaries of his trips are mostly concerned with buildings that remind him of antiquity, so while he mentions the places he stayed at and occasionally recognizes other buildings, like the towers and house towers he sees for example, he provides no details.

In his travels, Ciriaco also stayed in Arta as well as in Mystras. The first time he stayed in Mystras he mostly spoke of the fact that he visited antiquities in Sparta. In fact, we know he stayed in Mystras because he specifically says he went "down" to Sparta, which suggests he was residing at higher ground. In his diaries, he makes no mention of the palace, which suggests that to Ciriaco's eyes Mystras' urban environment must have been familiar or not worthy of being discussed (Fig. 170D-E).¹⁰⁷ The second time he went to Mystras he resided for a longer period of time. On 30 July 1447 he went back to Mystras and found Constantine Palaiologos, the 'glorious reigning despot' as well as Gemistos Plethon. 'I saw rushing to meet me in the Palace itself, the gifted young Athenian Laonikos Chalkokondyles'.¹⁰⁸ Ciriaco was hosted in the palace, which he refers to as 'regia', and engaged in activities that suggest the palace was set up to accommodate the work of intellectuals. Bodnar says that in the winter of 1447-48 Ciriaco compiled an account of the Roman calendar for the despot Constantine and produced a document on the *Bellum Troianum* of Dictys Cretensis, so he was also working on manuscripts at the court and experiences the

¹⁰⁶ On the Acciaiuoli palace on the Acropolis of Athens, see Tasos Tanulas, 'Through the Broken Looking Glass: The Acciaiuoli Palace in the Propylaea Reflected in the Villa of Lorenzo Il Magnifico at Poggio a Caiano', *Bollettino d'arte* 100 (1998): 1-32.

¹⁰⁷ d'Ancona, *Epigrammata reperta per Illyricvm a Cyriaco Anconitano apud Libvrniam*, XXXVII.

¹⁰⁸ d'Ancona, Bodnar, and Foss, *Later Travels*, esp. 298-9.

palace as a place of intellectual activity.¹⁰⁹ This large entourage of people is also attested in the funerary orations to Cleophe Malatesti written by Pepagomenos, where he indirectly refers to this diverse group of individuals with their families, while commemorating the wife of the despot.¹¹⁰ Pepagomenos points out how *Basilissa* Cleophe looked after the many different and practical needs of the poor but also of individuals who were either part of the court as *oikeioi* and their families, or *xenoi*, like himself who were welcomed while visiting and travelling through Mystras.¹¹¹

These people and the activities they performed at court needed spaces and close proximity to the seat of the despot for reasons of security and control. The palace complex in the morphological attributes that have come down to us — regardless of the transformations that occurred during the Ottoman period — still shows elements that can help us understand how it was designed, taking into consideration these needs, while incorporating architectural and urban designs similar to those taking place in Italian cities in the area of influence of the Republic of Venice during the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

Based on the letters we have of Cleophe, discussed in the previous chapters, we can assume that she received embassies at the palace. We also have further indirect evidence of the use of spaces at the palace from the chronicles of Sphrantzes, from which we know that during their marriage, Theodore II wanted to become a monk, suggesting that for a period he and Cleophe were separated. This separation

¹⁰⁹ Bodnar, *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens*, esp. 61-2.

¹¹⁰ Schmalzbauer, 'Eine bisher unedierte Monodie auf Kleope Palaiologina von Demetrios Pepagomenos'.

¹¹¹ Pepagomenos speaks of the many who are lamenting the death of Cleophe and in one passage he refers to Cleophe as the one consoling the "foreigners" at court, see Schmalzbauer, 228 vv. 155-57.

provoked a small crisis at court, and both Sphrantzes and Chalkokondyles refer to the fact that aristocrats close to the despot convinced him to reconsider and go back to live with Cleophe.¹¹² Therefore we can infer that these spaces were occupied and associated with these Latin *basilissai*. Another building was added, as the literature suggests, probably during Manuel II Palaiologos' rule, so between the Despotates of Theodore I and Theodore II.

The particular nature of Mystras' palace and urbanization becomes all the more evident when compared to imperial architecture in Constantinople. The palace in Mystras is functionally different from the palaces of Constantinople because of its openness to the public, especially given the large square in front it. It does not, therefore, follow the court ceremony as described by Pseudo-Kodinos, in which he describes a courtyard that is used only and exclusively by the emperor, closed by a gate, and used to move the emperor and the court.¹¹³ Such a device is certainly not a square, a piazza, and in that sense the experience in Mystras is different from that of an imperial palace. Similarly, the palace of the Tekfur Saray opens with the loggia towards the internal courtyard and presents a high wall towards the outside (Fig. 283A-B),¹¹⁴ whereas in the palace of Mystras the loggia that runs along the square is clearly meant to engage the outside.

The development, urban context, and use of the palace complex in Mystras is in form similar to that developed in the Italian cities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

¹¹² Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XV.1, 30-1; Chalkonkondyles, *The Histories*, 4.48, vol. I, 340-41.

¹¹³ Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, esp. 368-71.

¹¹⁴ Philip Niewöhner, 'The Late Late Antique Origins of Byzantine Palace Architecture', in *The Emperor's House: Palaces from Augustus to the Age of Absolutism*, ed. Michael Featherstone et al. (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 31-52, esp. 41-42.

and responds to similar needs.¹¹⁵ The Despots of Morea intended to show in the architecture and the urban structure their authority, and facilitate the administrative and financial practices and commerce, showing a rulership that was attentive and responsive to a world that opened up to the social and collective values of international exchanges. That this would happen in Mystras, despite its strong imperial relations, is evidence of the political project that is behind the city and the presence of the Latin *basilissai*. It is not possible to show directly the architectural choices to establish connections between Mystras and the Italian cities, especially those linked to Venice. To do so would require a detailed architectural investigation and an appropriate archaeological campaign. Only a stratigraphic survey of the walls of the buildings in Mystras capable of identifying the different construction phases would allow us to understand what is pertinent to the Byzantine period and what is pertinent to the Ottoman period, thus establishing direct links. However, it is possible to establish parallels from the point of view of the architectural morphology, both on the Kantakouzenos building, as well as on the fourth phase buildings.

V.3 Indices in the religious infrastructure of Mystras

V.3.a Early development of religious buildings

¹¹⁵ On the innovative urban design solutions determined by the communal palaces in eleventh- and thirteenth-century Italian cities, see Maureen C. Miller, 'From Episcopal to Communal Palaces: Places and Power in Northern Italy (1000-1250)', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 54, no. 2 (1995): 175–85; Maureen C. Miller, *The Bishop's Palace: Architecture and Authority in Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000). For the methodology applied to the study of the urban transformation of the city of Parma in twelfth and thirteenth century, see Areli Marina, *The Italian Piazza Transformed: Parma in the Communal Age* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), esp. 1-7.

The development of the religious infrastructure of Mystras spans the period from the early establishment of the Byzantine town after 1262 to the end of the Despotate. It offers another opportunity to detect the traces of the geopolitical and economic conditions underlying the political project of Mystras. Within this we can also find direct and indirect indices of the agency of women, both in their personal and diplomatic roles, insofar as they are an important part of that political project.

A first phase of the development of the religious infrastructure corresponds to the early development of Mystras, prior to Manuel Kantakouzenos' Despotate. The literature attributes to this period the renovation of the Metropolis by Nikephoros Moschopoulos, the construction of the Brontocheion monastery and its two churches, Hagioi Theodoroi and the Hodegetria (Table 30 – Table 32, Table 37 – Table 42), and, given the coincidence of the dating of the two churches, Ai-Giannaki (Table 46).¹¹⁶

With the arrival of Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de Lusignan, the religious landscape of Mystras saw the addition, in particular, of three significant buildings: Hagia Sophia — the palace church (Table 43-Table 45), the Peribleptos (Table 25-Table 29), and the Evangelistria (Table 47). We already saw in Chapter II that both Hagia Sophia and the Peribleptos bear indices of the presence of the Latin *basilissai*, both in the decoration and in the archaeological evidence.¹¹⁷

All three churches have a similar structure. All three have a central, cross in square plan with two columns providing an internal partition of the naos between the centre

¹¹⁶ On Ai-Giannaki, see below Appendix 02, 356

¹¹⁷ See above ch. II.2 - Agency of Latin princesses in the Peribleptos, 74-108

of the naos and the side opposite the bema. In the case of Hagia Sophia and Evangelistria, in front of the naos there is a narthex. In the case of the Evangelistria, the narthex has two levels, the second accessible from stairs outside the church on the west side, and both levels are covered by barrel vaults. While Chatzedakes refers to this second level as a women's gallery, there is no access or opening on the naos of the church, which makes his interpretation problematic.¹¹⁸ The narthex in Hagia Sophia is covered by a central dome, which reaches a height corresponding approximately to the highest point on the naos ceiling, and is covered by barrel vaults on the sides. The Peribleptos has no narthex. With the exception of Hagia Sophia, which is built just above the Palace complex, the Peribleptos and the Evangelistria are placed in the lower section of the hill, the same level that is occupied by the Brontocheion monastery, the Metropolis, and smaller churches such as Aï-Giannaki and Saint George (Fig. 2). This distribution takes into account of the incline of the hill but also of the overall urbanization plan which resulted from the presence of the Byzantine authority.

The fact that these three churches were built at a time when Mystras was deepening its relationship with Venice is supported by the choice of decorative elements. In the Evangelistria church, Chatzedakes identifies a saw-tooth motif, found on the frame of the central door of the iconostasis, which has a stone decoration that Chatzedakes identifies as tied to the original constructive phase.¹¹⁹ The frame shows a rhomboid pattern decorating the surface, and the inner-most section of the frame around the opening has a saw-tooth motif (Fig. 284A-C). These stone decorations are reminiscent of those found in the stone carved frieze decorating the rectangular

¹¹⁸ Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, esp. 91.

¹¹⁹ Chatzedakes, 92.

frames in the Lippomano Chapel in Venetian Negroponte,¹²⁰ and, later, in the portal of the church of Saint Michael in Vлахjана in Crete.¹²¹

Inside the *katholikon* of the Peribleptos the architrave of the *diakonikon* is decorated on the left hand side with small arches on pillars which frame leaves (Fig. 35, Table 28 Fig. 31). This architrave is interrupted by a sculpted, semi-spherical boss decorated with a lace motif. To the right of the boss there are medallions created by interlaced decorations, which frame once again a leaf.¹²² The same motifs can be found decorating the four marble lintels which are placed spanning the side arches underneath the central dome of the church of the Taxiarchis in Glezou in Mani, suggesting that these are common motifs in the area (Fig. 285).¹²³

On the west side of the *katholikon* of the Peribleptos there is a chapel dedicated to Saint Catherine, built in the second phase of the development of the complex, between 1380-1382 according to Louve-Kize.¹²⁴ Inside the chapel, the lintel of the apse is decorated with a motif of paired double columns with architrave and arches, in the shape of a triumphal arch, which frame leaves, and in two cases, instead of the leaves, we have a boss and a rosette respectively (Fig. 286).¹²⁵ Similar architraves can be found in the church of Christ the Saviour, in the architraves of the entrance

¹²⁰ Nikos D. Kontogiannis, 'What Did Syropoulos Miss? Appreciating the Art of the Lippomano Chapel in Venetian Negroponte', in *Sylvester Syropoulos on Politics and Culture in the Fifteenth-Century Mediterranean: Themes and Problems in the Memoirs* (London: New York: Routledge, 2016), 107–34, esp. 111 fig. 7.2b and 117.

¹²¹ Spiridione A. Curuni and Lucilla Donati, *Creta Veneziana: l'Istituto veneto e la Missione cretese di Giuseppe Gerola, collezione fotografica 1900-1902* (Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1988), 343 lastra n. 660.

¹²² Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 49.3.

¹²³ Δρανδάκης, 'Σχεδιάσμα καταλόγου των τοιχογραφημένων Βυζαντινών και Μεταβυζαντινών Ναών Λακωνίας', 222 cat. n. 376b.

¹²⁴ Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά', esp. 102.

¹²⁵ Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 49.6.

doors and in the church in Gergeri, Crete (Fig. 287).¹²⁶ They can also be seen in the sculpted detail of the lintel in the south wall of the church of Saint Mary in Paliani, Crete.¹²⁷

The fact that these decorations – the saw-tooth as well as the lintel decorations – are found both in Mystras and in Venetian Crete suggests some degree of shared decorative language.¹²⁸ The decoration of the church of Hagia Sophia includes a very clear sign of patronage of Despot Manuel Kantakouzenos in the presence of his monogram on the imposts of the south and north pillars of the west wall of the church.¹²⁹

A further expansion of the religious infrastructure of Mystras occurred during the Despotate of Theodore II, with the refurbishment of the metropolitan church and the addition of the Pantanassa, to which we turn next.

V.3.b The second phase of the Metropolis

Around 1291, after the move of the bishopric of Lakedaimon from Sparta to Mystras, the metropolitan church was renovated for the first time by Bishop Nikephoros

¹²⁶ Curuni and Donati, *Creta Veneziana: l'Istituto veneto e la Missione cretese di Giuseppe Gerola, collezione fotografica 1900-1902*, 378, lastre nn. 809, 1401, 1402, 1403.

¹²⁷ Curuni and Donati, 350, lastra n. 1330.

¹²⁸ For a survey of Crete's decorative stone carvings see Gerola's survey of Venetian monuments in Crete in Giuseppe Gerola, *Monumenti veneti nell'isola di Creta*, IV vols (Venezia: Regio Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1905, 1932).

¹²⁹ Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 142-3; Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 56.5-6; Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, 172 figg. 57-8.

Moschopoulos, as recorded in an inscription (Fig. 211).¹³⁰ Later the church was transformed a second time by the addition of an upper floor and the re-design of the exo-narthex (Table 22, Table 24 Fig. 10).¹³¹ In the secondary literature, the last transformation of the church is attested in the fifteenth century, based on inscriptions and monograms related to Bishop Matthaïos still visible inside the church (Fig. 288A). Chatzedakes points out that ‘the fifteenth-century addition [...] reflects the strong influences which came to Mystras from Constantinople with the building of the Aphetiko’.¹³²

The recurring monograms of the Bishop Matthew, and an inscription on the west wall ledge of the upper floor, suggest that the transformation of the church and the addition of the galleries should be dated during his bishopric, even though the exact dates of Matthew’s bishopric are unknown.¹³³ During Matthew’s bishopric, the thirteenth-century church was transformed: the structure covering the naves was destroyed and galleries were added (Table 22, Table 24 Fig. 12A-C). The upper level was then covered by cross-vaults and by five domes. Due to this transformation the pre-existing frescoes, painted during previous bishoprics, were damaged as is shown by the missing heads of the figures in the cycle of the life of Christ in the central nave (Fig. 288A-B).

¹³⁰ For the inscription see above page 206 footnotes nn. 22-23. The inscription in verses bears the 1291-92 date and it is located on the exterior wall of the exo-narthex adjacent to the external stairway. It says that ‘Nikephoros the humble proedros of Crete / along with the brother Aaron / makes new this divine home’. For the transcription of the inscription, see Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, esp. 121-22. Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, 25.

¹³¹ On the church of Hagios Demetrios see below Hagios Demetrios in Appendix 02, 344-347

¹³² Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, 29.

¹³³ ADDIN ZOTERO_ITEM CSL_ζ] λακεδαίμονιας ματθαίου(ς) [Matthew the possessor/Bishop of Lakedaimonia], see Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, 127.. “Matthew’s monogram is visible on the west cornice running under the tribunes. His monogram appears other times on the window’s arches and on the pillars”, in Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, 6.. See also Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, 127-28.

In the secondary literature, the dating of the transformation of the metropolitan church dedicated to Hagios Demetrios is linked to the coronation of Constantine XI Palaiologos, which, according to Sphrantzes, took place on 6 January 1449.¹³⁴ However, the timing is improbable. John VIII Palaiologos died on 31 October 1448.¹³⁵ On 13 November, Thomas Palaiologos, his brother, arrived in Constantinople, having just been informed of the death of the brother. On 6 December Sphrantzes was sent to the Sultan to tell him that Constantine had been chosen to be the next emperor. According to Sphrantzes, imperial officials then went to Mystras to crown Constantine emperor on 6 January. On 12 March Constantine arrived in Constantinople.¹³⁶ There is roughly one month between 6 December, the day Sphrantzes was sent out to the Sultan, and 6 January, the day of the investiture of Constantine as emperor in Mystras.

It is hard to imagine that the renovation of the church could have taken place in that month and it also hard to imagine that the renovation could have been initiated before the final decision about which of the Palaiologan brothers would be crowned emperor. Thomas and Demetrios were in Constantinople while Constantine in Mystras, and since it was not sure where they would have been at time of the decision it was unclear where the coronation would have taken place. Furthermore, since the ceremonial procedures for the coronation of the Byzantine emperor were

¹³⁴ Sphrantzes, *Cronaca*, XXIX.4, 102-3.

¹³⁵ Sphrantzes, XXVIII.7, 100-1.

¹³⁶ Sphrantzes, XXIX 4-7 and XXX 1-2, 102-5.

set up for Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, it is unlikely that they could be carried out with the same degree of officiality in a different place.¹³⁷

Since the name of the bishop on the stone cornice decorating the lower part of the galleries in the main *naos* of the church is that of Matthaïos, he is believed to be a contemporary of Constantine XI. Papamastorakis challenges this traditional dating.¹³⁸

Based on an inscription in the church of St John the Baptist in Gortynia, Papamastorakis shows that Bishop Matthaïos was active in the late twenties of the fifteenth century since the inscription bears the date 1428/9 and also bears the names of Despot Theodore II and his wife Cleophe, who died in 1433.¹³⁹ According to Papamastorakis therefore, Matthaïos was not bishop in the forties. In fact, Bishop Methodios occupied the seat since 1439. The addition of the galleries cannot be related to the coronation, and since Bishop Matthaïos, mentioned in the carved epigraphy inside the *naos*, seems to be active in the late twenties, it is plausible according to Papamastorakis to date the construction of the galleries in the Metropolis around the same time of the early phases of the construction of the Pantanassa.¹⁴⁰

Papamastorakis' proposed re-dating of the refurbishment of the Metropolis is also supported by a request that the emperor makes of the Venice Republic to obtain

¹³⁷ For a discussion on the Imperial coronation in the Late period, see Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court*, esp. 414-27.

¹³⁸ See Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', esp. 288-92. Cfr. Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, p. 29; Μαρίνου, *Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά*, p. 251; Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras* pp. 17, 125-30.

¹³⁹ For the inscription, see Denis Feissel and Anne Philippidis-Braat, 'Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance. III. Inscriptions du Péloponnèse (à l'exception de Mistra)', *Travaux et Mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance* 9 (1985): 267-395, esp. 349-50 n. 87.

¹⁴⁰ Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', esp. 288-92.

wood for construction in 1419. A Venetian document from 2 April 1419 tells us of a direct request of the emperor via Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes for construction wood. A request for four hundred cypress beams was granted by the Venetian Senate and the wood was sent from Crete to Morea for the renovation of a church.¹⁴¹ In fact, the document states that the shipment is ‘pro aptatione [...] ecclesia’. The concordance in the female singular ablative of *aptaione* and *ecclesia* indicates that the ‘pro aptatione’, is linked to ‘ecclesia’, and therefore the planks were sent for a church renovation. It is notable that the Venice Senate granted with an official act the Despotate of Morea with such a significant amount of wood without any direct compensation, reflecting a diplomatic relation between the Empire, the Despotate and the Republic that must have been good.¹⁴²

While the evidence is not conclusive, the evolution and dating of the Metropolis tells us that it was refurbished within the same time period when the marriage between Theodore II Palaiologos and Cleophe Malatesti was arranged and when the expansion of the palace complex took place. The rebuilding of the Metropolis and the transformation of the complex were therefore part of a broader expansion plan for the built environment in Mystras, one that was sufficiently significant to attract the gift of construction materials from the Venice Republic upon a direct request of the emperor, and that could have also reflected the presence at court of Cleophe, a woman who was close to the Republic and whose background might have influenced the solutions adopted for the design of the palace complex.

¹⁴¹ The deliberation is in *Senato, Deliberazioni, Misti, Registro* 52, f. 162. It is reported in Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir a l’histoire des Croisades au XVe siècle.*, 290; Thiriet, *Régestes des délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Romanie t. 2. 1400-1430*, II:174. Also commented in Matschke, ‘Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries’, 788 n. 102.

¹⁴² Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 264.

V.3.c Indices from the Pantanassa

The church of the Virgin Pantanassa, the *katholikon* of the monastery by the same name, was one of the last buildings erected in Mystras.¹⁴³ The monastery is built on a terraced area outside the wall of the *kastrón*, close to the Monembasia gate (Fig. 2, Table 35 Fig. 61, Table 53 Fig. 62). The church presents the *Mistratypus* design with a three-nave basilica plan on the ground floor and a cross-in-square plan on the upper floor (Table 33, Table 35 Fig. 63A-B, Table 35 Fig. 64).¹⁴⁴ Numerous inscriptions have been found in its premises. A particular stone inscription, once located on the major altar of the church, is the reason why the construction of the church was believed in secondary literature to have been started around 1428. The inscription, now lost in its entirety, most likely ran along three sides of the border of an altar's stone and was recorded by Michel Fourmont during his mission to document Greek inscriptions in the Peloponnese in 1730 (Fig. 289-Fig. 291).¹⁴⁵

According to Fourmont the entire inscription once read: '[The] holy and divine altar of the imperial and patriarchal monastery of our All Holy Theotokos called the Pantanassa [Queen of All] for the celebration of the [...] rites by the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Lakedaimon Lord Neilos as representative of the Most Holy Ecumenical Patriarch Lord Dionysios in the reign of our pious sovereign Lord

¹⁴³ On the church of the Theotokos Pantanassa, see below Appendix 02, 353-355.

¹⁴⁴ Horst Hallensleben, 'Untersuchungen zur Genesis und Typologie des "Mistratypus"', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* 18 (1969): 105-18.

¹⁴⁵ See manuscript by Fourmont in Bibliothèque National de France Suppl. Gr., 855 (n. 235), f. 93v. The finding is reported also in Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 137-38. For a transcription and interpretation, see Millet, 137-8; Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, 286 n. 9.

Theodore Palaiologos Porphyrogennetos in the month of September in the year 6937 (1428)',¹⁴⁶

The 1428 dating based on this inscription has been recently contested by Titos Papamastorakis, who believes that the inscription is not pertinent to the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁷ His argument relies on the re-attribution of an inscription on a stone altar, kept in the Museum in Mystras (Inv. N. 1014),¹⁴⁸ which bears a passage of the original inscription surveyed by Fourmont. By comparing the text transcribed by Titos Papamastorakis from the stone slab in the Museum in Mystras with the lower portion of the transcription by Fourmont at f. 92v of the *Bibliothèque National de France Suppl. Gr.*, 855 (n. 235), it is possible to confirm that the stone slab in Mystras, as suggested by Papamastorakis, was indeed part of the altar surveyed by Fourmont. The transcription on the lower portion of f. 92v is visually arranged as to be part of one of the borders of the altar and it matches with the part of the inscription on the border of the stone slab in Mystras that reads: 'μητροπολίτου τῆς ἁγιωτάτης μητροπόλεως Λακεδαιμονίας κῦρ Νεῖλο κατ ἐπιτροπὴν τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου καὶ οἰκουμενικοῦ' (Fig. 291).¹⁴⁹

Based on epigraphic analysis conducted by Titos Papamastorakis and George Velenis of the shape of the some of the letters in the inscription, such as "Σ" and

¹⁴⁶ "Θυσιαστήριον θεῖον καὶ ἅγιον τῆς βασιλικῆς καὶ π(ατ)ρ(ι)αρχικῆς μονῆς τῆς ὑπεραγίας ἡμῶν θ(εοτό)κου τῆς ἐπονομαζομένης παντανάσσης τοῦ τελεῖσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ ταῖς [...] τελεταῖς παρὰ τοῦ πανιερωτάτου μητροπολίτου τῆς ἁγιωτάτης μητροπόλεως Λακεδαιμονίας κῦρ Νεῖλο κατ ἐπιτροπὴν τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου καὶ οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριάρχου κῦρ Διονυσίου ἐπὶ βασιλείας τῶν εὐσεβέστατων βασιλείων ἡμῶν κῦρ Θεοδώρου Παλαιολόγου τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου κατὰ μῆνα Σεπτέμβριο ἔτους 6937" as in Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 138. The English translation here quoted is from Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', 293.

¹⁴⁷ Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', esp. 292-6.

¹⁴⁸ Papamastorakis, esp. for a reconstruction of the stone slab see 295 fig. 15, 295 n. 44. For an image of the inscription see esp. 296 fig. 16.

¹⁴⁹ For a picture of the inscription in Mystras, see Papamastorakis, esp. 295-6 and 296 fig. 16.

“Ω”, and on the use of the letter “Σ” rather than “C” for the capital letter *sigma*, and on grammar imprecisions, such as the lack of concordance between the genitive plural of ‘τῶν εὐσεβέστατων βασιλειῶν’ and ‘Θεοδώρου Παλαιολόγου τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου’ the only one Lord mentioned, Papamastorakis believes the inscription to be later than the fifteenth century and rather dates it after the sixteenth century and before 1730 when Fourmont read it.¹⁵⁰ Taking this evidence into account forces us to reconsider the time period when the church was erected and decorated, and, rather, to connect the building more directly to its founder, *ktetor*, Ioannes Phrangopoulos.

Even though the inscription surveyed by Fourmont makes direct reference to ‘θεοδώρου παλαιολόγου του πορφυρογεννητου’, it is another notable member of the court of Mystras who features most frequently inside the church. Ioannes Phrangopoulos was *προτοστράτορ* (*protostrator*), the troop commander,¹⁵¹ and *καθολικός μεσάζων* (*katholikos mesazon*), prime minister and confidant to the despot of Morea ‘entrusted with the administration of the empire’.¹⁵² He was active between 1428 and 1443 and is remembered several times inside the church, with his monogram inserted in different locations (Fig. 234A-B). Phrangopoulos’ monogram and titles appear above three windows of the west façade, on the abacus of the first capital, on the right side of the west entrance.¹⁵³ His name also features on a dedicatory metric composition inscribed in a circle around the fresco of the bust of

¹⁵⁰ Papamastorakis, 296.

¹⁵¹ ‘During the Palaiologan period the protostrator was one of the highest functionaries; he had ceremonial duties and commanded troops’, in Kazhdan, Alexander, "Protostrator" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. III (Oxford University Press, 1991)

¹⁵² ‘[...] the Emperor's confidant entrusted with the administration of the empire’, in Kazhdan, Alexander, "Mesazon" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. II (Oxford University Press, 1991)

¹⁵³ Millet, ‘Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)’, 134-41.

the Virgin in the central dome on the west upper gallery above the narthex of the church (Fig. 233).¹⁵⁴ The nature of this last inscription and the locations of the monograms suggest that Ioannes Phrangopoulos had a relevant role in the erection of the church and the monastery complex, and was not just a restorer.¹⁵⁵

It is important to note that Ioannes Phrangopoulos was later mentioned as *γενεράλης*, *generales*, in an *argyrobull* by Despot Constantine Dragases Palaiologos in 1444.¹⁵⁶ This title is a less formal expression of the official *protostrator* or *katholikos mesazon*.¹⁵⁷ His long-standing role as *katholikos mesazon* for at least two different despots indicates that Phrangopoulos would have had sufficient funds and time, from the early years of his appointment to the end of his political career, to complete the construction of the church and of the annex monastery.

Further evidence against 1428 as the start date for the construction of the monastic complex is provided from Phrangopoulos' life, evidence that is helpful for determining a more accurate timing for the construction and decoration of the church. Ioannes Phrangopoulos was part of an important and influential family in Morea. Members of the family were acting officials at the service of the Byzantine imperial and religious establishment: Manuel Phrangopoulos was protostrator of Bishop Maxinos, metropolitan of Patras; his brother, one Ioannes Phrangopoulos,

¹⁵⁴ The inscription reads: “πολλων τυχων σου των χαριτων παρθενε / μικρον κομιζω σοι δωρον νεον τονδε / ιωανν[η]ς φραγγοπουλος πρωτοστρα[τ]ω[ρ]/ου προβλ[η]τος ενδεξιου τυχειν θελων.”, as transcribed in Millet, 137.

¹⁵⁵ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, 9; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, 96.

¹⁵⁶ The text of the argyrobulle is in Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (Vindobonae: C. Gerold, 1860), vol. III: 258-9; Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολόγια και Πελοποννησιακά*, 1930, 17-8.

¹⁵⁷ On the role of the office of the *μεσάζων* see Millet, ‘Inscriptions inédites de Mistra’, esp. 465; Zakythenos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, esp. vol. II, 98-9, 102-3, 334; Jean Verpeaux, ‘Contribution à l’étude de l’administration byzantine: “o mesazon”’, *Byzantinoslavica* 16, no. 2 (1955): 276–91.

homonymous to Ioannes of Mystras, was governor of Grevena. Both men were not only of relevance in the Morea, but were actively engaged with foreign powers present in the region, suggesting the family established itself in the Peloponnese thanks to its relations to both Byzantine elites and foreigners. Matschke notes that merchants from the Despotate were of great interest to the Venetians, possibly more than Venetian merchants in markets abroad, and we have records in the first half of the fifteenth century of wealthy individuals from Byzantium depositing their valuables with Venetian bankers:¹⁵⁸ for example, *zentillomo* (Michael or Paul) Sophianos, the *megasdux* and former *protostrator* Manuel Phrangopoulos, and, after 1437/38, the *protostrator* George Eudaimonoioannes, son of Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes from Mystras, who was responsible for the request to the Venetians of the construction material discussed above.¹⁵⁹ The recorded financial activities of Manuel and Ioannes Phrangopoulos with Venetian banks and merchants, reveal that they were pursued regardless of the resistance of the Byzantine imperial authorities.¹⁶⁰

The *protostrator* of Morea was similarly exposed to the West, where he travelled while on his appointment. A letter written by Cardinal Bessarion in 1439 demonstrates that Phrangopoulos was in Florence during the Ecumenical Council of Ferrara-Florence as part of the Byzantine delegation following the despot of Morea. The presence of Ioannes Phrangopoulos in Florence is recorded in letters exchanged

¹⁵⁸ Matschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', 787 and nn. 97-101.

¹⁵⁹ See above page 287 footnotes nn. 141-142. 'In 1419, Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes appears as an importer of wood from Crete for the construction of a church (in Mistra?)', in Matschke, 788 n. 102.

¹⁶⁰ On the economy and the market exchanges in the region, see Matschke; Angeliki E. Laiou and Charalambos Bouras, eds., *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, III vols (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002); Jacoby, 'Rural Exploitation and Market Economy in the Late Medieval Peloponnese'.

between Cardinal Bessarion in Florence and a member of the Eugenikos family in Mystras. Phrangopoulos was responsible for delivering the letter by Eugenikos to his friend Cardinal Bessarion, who was writing to Mystras in 1439 expressing his condolences for the death of Eugenikos' son due to the plague. Eugenikos' letter mentions Phrangopoulos.¹⁶¹

Phrangopoulos' travels to Florence, as well as his exposure to the arts and the architecture of the city, may be reflected in some of the design solutions employed in the decoration of the exterior and the interior of the church he sponsored in Mystras. Some of these elements have already been studied in the literature, such as the stone decoration on the apses or the use of certain formal composition and use of colours for the interior frescoes, and have also been associated with the West.¹⁶²

This digression on Phrangopoulos' life is important to circumscribe the timing of the building of the Pantanassa as an early fifteenth-century construction. The floor plan of the church and its relation to the whole complex reveal a mature and well-planned design programme, one of the major architecture endeavours in the Morea in the fifteenth century.

The complex of the Pantanassa is built on a very steep slope on the east side of Mystras, in the middle section of the hill just below the castle. The complex is surrounded by a precinct that encloses the main church, the monastery, a series of

¹⁶¹ The letter is in Σπυρίδων Π. Λάμπρος, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, vol. II (Αθήνα: Επιτροπή Εκδόσεως των Καταλοίπων Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου, 1924), vol. 1, 164-5. For an English translation of this letter see Diana Gilliland Wright, 'The Eugenikos Sons', *Surprised by Time*, 4 February 2015, <http://surprisedbytime.blogspot.co.uk/2015/02/the-eugenikos-sons.html>.

¹⁶² Mouriki, 'Palaeologan Mistra and the West'; Ασπρά-Βαρδαβάκη and Εμμανουήλ, *Η Μονή της Παντάνασσας στον Μυστρά: Οι τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αιώνα*, esp. 330-31.

annexed loggias and a small isolated building (Table 35 Fig. 61). Due to the nature of the site, the church is built on different ground levels and with an overall design that integrates the vertical section of the church, the loggia overlooking the valley, the outer terraces, the passages between the church and the monastery and the elevation of the monastery's quarters. The latter are arranged in a long and narrow building, which stretches parallel to the longer axis of the church (Table 33 Fig. 55 – Table 33 Fig. 57).

The main access to the complex is through a passage on the north side of the precinct. This access takes to a long open-air corridor that runs parallel to the monastery walls and that constitutes the main axis of the complex. The church is located on its west side, while the monastery is on its east side. The complex takes full advantage of the location and uses the slope of the hill as a natural defence. In this sense, the monastery's east wall rises up from a lower level of the hill and constitutes a long defensive barrier. The three recessed arches (Table 35 Fig. 61), still visible on the lower part of the north portion of the monastery wall, might also have had a defensive purpose.

From the level of this long and narrow courtyard, a series of steps lead to the ground level of the church, which is also accessible from a door on the lower level of the wall separating the church from the exterior at the courtyard level. On the back of the church, a two-story building ends the south side of the long and narrow court, closed by a gate (Fig. 292).¹⁶³ On the east side of the church a loggia opens above the

¹⁶³ This gate is visible on a photograph taken at the beginning of the twentieth century and published along side a watercolour on tourist guide published in 1930 in France. See Francesco Perilla, *Mistra: Histoires Franques, Byzantines, Catalanes En Grèce: Notes D'art Et De Voyages* (Athènes: Éditions Perilla, 1930), 159, 164.

courtyard connecting the pedestrian circulation from the front to the back of the Pantanassa, as well as providing visual continuity between the upper and lower level of the whole complex.

The articulation of different sections and levels of the complex and of their connections can only be the result of a carefully planned design, and of a well conducted construction practice, also evident from details of the church. This construction practice is also mirrored in the careful employment of the *Mistratypus* design for the interior articulation of the upper galleries of the *katholikon* (Table 33 Fig. 54, Table 35 Fig. 63A-B, Table 35 Fig. 64)¹⁶⁴

The role of Phrangopoulos in commissioning the church of the Pantanassa must be interpreted in relation to imperial patronage in the city. The connection with the imperial family can be made not only in regard to the overall design of the building, but also in relation to the un-orthodox and sophisticated quality of the architectural decorations to be found in the interior and exterior of the church. One example clarifies this quality. On the exterior wall of the lower section of the apsidal zone there are architectural decorations of a unique and rich composition. They are superimposed on a series of small recessed, slightly pointed arches, carved in a porous sand stone (probably limestone), decorating the wall and framing the small arches and the central windows of the three apses (Fig. 293). A palmette motif decorates the top of the extrados of each arch, which are then mirrored by a festoon relief with inverted framing arches that runs along the section between the lower arches and the upper windows. In the *intrados* there is a curvilinear decoration, which outlines a

¹⁶⁴ Hallensleben, 'Untersuchungen zur Genesis und Typologie des "Mistratypus"', 105-18.

tripartite division of the arc into an upper lobe and two side lobes (Fig. 294). It is important to note that this trilobate shape of the intrados of the arch is not tracery, intended to support glass, as was common even at this time with this motif, but is purely decorative.¹⁶⁵

These decorative patterns clearly speak of a broader visual language that relates to decorative motifs found in diverse contexts in European cultural production from the twelfth to fifteenth century. Out of the many possible examples, it is worth noting the formal connection with arched and lobated decorative motifs decorating the intrados and extrados of framing arched low relief structures, such as the ones in a limestone retable framing six apostles. The retable made in Beaume in the late fourteenth century is now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and it shows framing arched structures with the trilobite motif on the intrados and small curling leaves on the extrados (Fig. 295).¹⁶⁶ Similar arched structures in low relief are found in woodcarvings decorating wooden panels with paintings. The Altarpiece of the Patron Saints of Cologne, dated to the middle of the fifteenth century, once attributed to Stefan Lochner, now in the Cologne Cathedral (Fig. 296),¹⁶⁷ not only shows this motif but it also presents the festoon relief with inverted framing arches, which decorates the portion of the apses of the Pantanassa (Fig. 293). The decorative motif is also used on the ivory diptych plaquettes (ca. 1400) decorating the front and the

¹⁶⁵ Justine M. Andrews, 'Gothic and Byzantine in the Monumental Art of Famagusta', in *Medieval and Renaissance Famagusta: Studies in Architecture, Art and History*, ed. Michael J. K. Walsh, Peter W. Edbury, and Nicholas Coureas (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2012), 144–66, esp. 148–53.

¹⁶⁶ On the late fourteenth-century *Six Apostles from a limestone retable* [made in Beaune, France], limestone, 63.3 x 107.3 x 7.9 cm, 74.4kg), Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916, accession Number:16.32.169a, b Metropolitan Museum New York, gallery 305. See William D. Wixom, 'Medieval Sculpture at the Metropolitan 800 to 1400', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 62, no. 4 (2005): 7–48, 36.

¹⁶⁷ On the Altarpiece of the Patron Saints of Cologne, see Brigitte Corley, 'A Plausible Provenance for Stefan Lochner?', *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 59, no. 1 (1996): 78–96.

back covers of the manuscript Paris, Musée du Louvre *MR 416* with the works of Dionysios the Areopagite.¹⁶⁸ The manuscript was donated by Manuel II Palaiologos to the Abbey of Saint Denis in 1408, although the plaquette is attributed to a follower of the Atelier of the Master of the Great Passion Diptychs.¹⁶⁹

The floral decoration of the extrados of the arch rendered in the stone decoration of the apses of the Pantanassa and the red lines, which are still visible as contouring painted decoration to the sculptural design, both resemble features that can be seen in similar treatments of stone carved decorations employed, for instance, in a thirteenth-century limestone lavabo originally installed in the Templar chapel of Sainte-Catherine at Montbellet, near Mâcon, in Burgundy and now at The Cloisters (Fig. 297A-B).¹⁷⁰

The lavabo also presents another sculptural element that relates to the cultural and visual environment that might have inspired the patrons and artists of the Pantanassa. In this comparative analysis, the two trilobate apertures employed in the decoration of the top arch of the lavabo recalls similar trilobate apertures decorating the campanile of the church of the Pantanassa. They feature in groups of three as motif decorating three sides of the campanile in the lower area of the upper loggia (Fig. 232).

¹⁶⁸ Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires Médiévaux, Ve-XVe Siècle* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2003), cat. n. 205.

¹⁶⁹ Gaborit-Chopin, cat. n. 205.

¹⁷⁰ The lavabo from Sainte-Catherine at Montbellet is on display at The Cloisters, gallery 7. For the Lavabo, thirteenth-century, limestone, 193 x 165.1 cm, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Brummer and Ernest Brummer, in memory of Joseph Brummer, 1948, Accession Number: 48.76.3, Metropolitan Museum New York, see 'Lavabo | French | The Met', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, i.e. The Met Museum, accessed 13 September 2016, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471317>.

The detailed urban and architectural compositions of the monastic complex and the decorative apparatus of the church exhibit features coming from outside a strict Byzantine tradition, further evidence of the multi-stratified taste of the imperial court, as well as of the elite families living in Mystras, a city with an architectural culture that Doula Mouriki described with ‘deep roots in [...] Western architecture’,¹⁷¹ or at a minimum rooted in a shared architectural and broader cultural tradition. That the comparative examples are from a broad spectrum of sources across Western European countries is an index of the strong agency of representatives of those communities in Mystras, such as the Latin *basilissai*, and of individuals like Phrangopoulos, who had deep ties to them.

It appears that from its early stages the building of the *katholikon* of the monastery of the Pantanassa was built to accommodate members of the community who wanted to be separated from but still visible to the rest of the congregation attending the liturgy. The *ktetor* Phrangopoulos was very close to the imperial Palaiologan family in Mystras, which, by the time of the foundation of the monastery consisted not only of the family of Theodore II Palaiologos, but also of the legitimate heir to the throne of the Byzantine Empire, John VIII, both sons of Manuel II.¹⁷² This imperial connection played a role in finalizing the design of the church. Even though the family house of the Phrangopouloi is situated just a few hundred meters away, the design of the complex did not take this into account (Fig. 298A-C). Rather, while the residence

¹⁷¹ ‘The round arches are framed by limestone columns supporting pointed arches which are crowned by palmette-like ornaments. The shape of the outer arches is echoed by a festoon in relief above them with an ornamentation, which also consists of palmette-like motifs. Poros sculpture of this type is alien to the Byzantine tradition but has deep roots in the tradition of Western architecture’, in Mouriki, ‘Palaeologan Mistra and the West’. And reprinted in Mouriki, *Studies in Late Byzantine Painting*, 475.

¹⁷² On the presence in Mystras of the Palaiologan family and of Manuel II Palaiologos, see relevant sections in Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*.

was connected to the monastery by a winding trail that reaches the complex from the back, there is a direct connection with the despot's Palace, even though it lies further away through the Monembasia gate (Fig. 2). This access goes directly to the south side of the *katholikon* and therefore is more functional to the use of the upper level of the Pantanassa.

The stairs leading to the upper level of the church were designed to be reachable from a small pedestrian walkway that originates from the left side of the Monembasia gate (Fig. 299).¹⁷³ The pedestrian path led directly to the stairs to the upper level of the Pantanassa allowing for access to the church directly from the outside, without passage through the premises of the monastery, allowing the lower level to be reserved for the monks. The galleries and the accesses to them do not have the monumental proportions of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople of course, but they are nevertheless sufficiently easily accessible to be routinely used by participants in the liturgy. For example, the stairway leading to the galleries from the exterior entered through a doorway, which is over one meter wide. The upper galleries themselves, while again not monumental given the dimensions of the overall building, are approximately 2 metres wide and 15 metres long on the sides for the side galleries, and 3 meters wide and nine metres across for the transversal gallery above the narthex (Table 33).

The use of the upper galleries of the Pantanassa by the city elites of Mystras is made evident by the general interior decoration of the church and by several fresco details. When considering them along with the architecture of the church, it can be implied

¹⁷³ The pedestrian walkway is marked on Millet's plan of Mystras. However, he mislabels the Monembasia gate as Nauplion gate. See Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, pl. 1.

these spaces might have been in use by the local aristocracy and notable individuals linked to Phrangopoulos. The fact that a private individual, Ioannes Phrangopoulos, had his name and his titles painted around the bust of the Theotokos and child, encircled by seraphim and supported by eight prophets (Fig. 233), in the central dome of the upper narthex, directly opposite to the apsidal conch of the church, is an indication that the space of the galleries were conceived having in mind as audience the elites of Mystras.¹⁷⁴ When compared with the location traditionally used for this kind of inscriptions, often painted above the entrance of the church *naos*, the one used to commemorate Ioannes Phrangopoulos indicates it was accessed and meant to be read by a selected group of people.¹⁷⁵

The nature of the fresco decoration of the gallery walls supports this hypothesis. Both the north and the south upper galleries of the Pantanassa are decorated with frescoes (Fig. 46, Fig. 186, Fig. 188A-E, Fig. 191 – Fig. 193, Fig. 236 – Fig. 238, Fig. 300, Fig. 302, Table 34, Table 35 Fig. 63A-B, Table 35 Fig. 64B, Table 36 Fig. 65), as are the two symmetrical barrel vaults delimited by two sets of two little domes on the south and north sides of each gallery. The two barrel vaults define the main transversal axis, perpendicular to the axis of the ground floor naves of the church, and constitute therefore the central areas of both the upper galleries and of the whole church (Table 34). The importance of this space is reinforced by the subjects chosen for the decoration of the intrados of these vaults: four of the major scenes of the Cycle of the Feasts, the Annunciation (Fig. 186), the Nativity (Fig. 236), the Resurrection of Lazarus (Fig. 46) and the Transfiguration (Fig. 237), are

¹⁷⁴ The role of Phrangopoulos as *ktetor* is discussed in Ασπρά-Βαρδαβάκη and Εμμανουήλ, *Η Μονή της Παντάνασσας στον Μυστρά: Οι τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αιώνα*, esp. 29-39, 82-90 .

¹⁷⁵ On the links between inscriptions, epigrams and representation of individuals in the late Byzantine period, see Ivan Drpić, *Epigram, Art, and Devotion in Later Byzantium* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

depicted in the four half vaults while some of the remaining scenes are situated on the vault of the main nave (Fig. 188A-D, Fig. 192).

The Annunciation and the Nativity form a unit on the barrel vault covering the central bay of the south upper gallery, and they occupy the east and the west portion of the same vault respectively (Fig. 186, Fig. 238, Fig. 236), with the Journey to Bethlehem on the south wall of the bay (Fig. 300). Because of this arrangement, those entering the upper gallery from the external staircase, while turning to the right facing the south end of the gallery, faced the central scenes of the Theotokos cycle, with a strong emphasis on the pregnant Theotokos as shown in the depiction of the scene of the Journey (Fig. 300), making this bay a very appropriate space for the female part of the congregation.

The scene of the Annunciation, as well as the other scenes of the Nativity, of the Resurrection of Lazarus, and of the Transfiguration – this is true also for other major scenes covering the main nave of the church – are very detailed. Such details vary: from the rendition of cityscapes in background of the scenes of the Feasts, to the visual rendition of architectural and sculptural details (Fig. 239A-D, Fig. 243, Fig. 188C), such as the sarcophagi in the scene of the Anastasis (Fig. 192, Fig. 193) and the one in the Resurrection of Lazarus (Fig. 46); from the faces of people gathering and attending the scenes, such as the scene of the Resurrection of Lazarus and the Entry into Jerusalem (Fig. 188A-D), to the costumes worn and the objects held by these people (Fig. 188D), to the richly characterized and animated children and

animals in the scene of the Nativity (Fig. 236).¹⁷⁶ All these details reveal a level of craftsmanship of outstanding quality. They can, and were meant to, be seen up-close, thanks to the access given to them via the upper gallery. Whoever was using this space could then enjoy them while following the liturgy.

The frescoes in the upper gallery of the Pantanassa were presented by the *ktetor* Phrangopoulos as a gift to the Theotokos and as a token to his equals in the city of Mystras, who were exposed to the same international context. While contemplating the Feast cycle, they could enjoy refined details and the sophisticated visual culture expressed in many iconographic and subtle choices of these scenes, as well as the many decorative details and patterns enriching the liminal spaces and surfaces of the upper galleries, which can only be appreciated by those gathered above the *naos* of the church of this monastic *katholikon*.¹⁷⁷ Even though their identities still constitute an open question, the laymen and laywomen who were granted access to the upper galleries of the monastic church, were made aware of the role of Phrangopoulos by the inscription prominent in the upper narthex, and could be exposed, on one side, to the actual executorial qualities of the frescoes, and, on the other side, to the references to the late Palaiologan visual culture associated with the iconography employed.

¹⁷⁶ Doula Mouriki has investigated some of these visual motifs. See in particular Mouriki, 'Palaeologan Mistra and the West'; Mouriki, 'The Mask Motif in the Wall Paintings of Mistra: Cultural Implications of a Classical Feature in Late Byzantine Painting'.

¹⁷⁷ This visual culture was a distinctive feature of the late artistic production initiated in imperial centres such as Constantinople, Thessalonike as well as in other Byzantine territories re-conquered by Byzantium after Michael VIII Palaiologos recapture Constantinople in 1261. See Kalopissi-Verti, 'Aspects of Byzantine art after the recapture of Constantinople (1261 - c. 1300): reflections of imperial policy, reactions, confrontation with the Latins'.

A minor detail in one of the fresco panels imitating *opus sectile*, provides an index of the underlying relationship with Western decoration and heraldry (Fig. 202). On the penultimate east bay of the south gallery, the right pillar has a decorative panel in fresco *opus sectile* with a rhomboid red slab arranged in the shape of a diamond. The colouring imitates red porphyry. It is inserted in a rectangular area that imitates an alabaster slab. The two areas are encircled by a *fascia* motif of black and white checks (Fig. 202A-B). This decorative solution is unique in the context of late Byzantine art in the Morea region. Based on direct observations, collected between 13 to 24 April 2015 in a photographic survey of almost fifty churches in Lakonia, and conducted to gather comparative visual material for the study of the frescoes in Mystras, no other example of this kind of decoration was identified.¹⁷⁸ I suggest that this detail should be read in relation to the visual repertoire associated with Western heraldry. Similar elements of the decoration in this fresco *opus sectile* in the gallery in the Pantanassa, such as the decorative fascia with checks — employed in many different variations and on very diverse set of objects, the imitation of alabaster, and the colour scheme are reminiscent of the composite elements of the coat of arms of the family of origin of Cleophe, the Malatesti (Fig. 303B-E).

These tenuous correspondences are not enough to prove any direct connections between the fresco decoration and Cleophe, but they speak of a cultural environment where emblems and coat of arms of Latin families were in circulation through precious objects decorating costumes and dresses. An example of this kind of objects is a silver belt-buckle decorated with silver gilt and niello, from the island of Euboea, which bears in its centre the coat of arms of the Malatesti of Rimini, or Cesena. The

¹⁷⁸ For a list of monuments visited during the April 2015 survey see Appendix 03, 358-361.

belt-buckle is now part of the Chalcis Treasure now in the collection of the British Museum (Fig. 303A).¹⁷⁹

V.4 Mystras after Byzantium

The fact that a number of individuals described in this dissertation, such as Ciriaco and Bessarion, travelled between Mystras and Italy, and acted as vehicles of cultural exchanges, maintained in Italy a fascination with Mystras and its relationship with Sparta. This interest did not wane after 1453, nor when Mystras was handed over to the Ottomans in 1460. Italians' continued interest for Mystras and the Morea as a strategic location allows us to detect its agency through the reactions of Western observers and travellers to Mystras.

V.4.a Italian observers of Mystras

In 1459, Pope Pius II Piccolomini (born 1405 – died 1464) organized the Mantua Congress to rally the powers of Italy to conduct a crusade against the Turks and recapture Constantinople. The Venice Republic responded to this call to arms. From 18 June 1464, the pope, old and sickly, waited in Ancona for the fleet that would have had to leave for the crusade. Pintoricchio (born 1454 – died 1513) represented this occasion in a fresco in the Piccolomini Library in the Cathedral of Siena, commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini in 1492. The library is decorated with large frescoes, the realization of which began in 1502, and

¹⁷⁹ On this silver belt-buckle, see 'Belt-Buckle in Halkida, Chalcis Treasure (Central Greece and Euboea, Évvoia (Island), Halkida), British Museum Collection, AF.2851.A', British Museum, accessed 15 July 2016, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3129285&partId=1&place=36592&plaA=36592-3-2&page=4. The belt-buckle is in Luke Syson and Dora Thornton, *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), 55.

represented salient moments of the life of Pius II Piccolomini, uncle to Francesco.¹⁸⁰

The last episode depicted was of Pius II waiting for the fleet in Ancona (Fig. 304). In the painting were represented Doge Cristoforo Moro of Venice and the last despot of Morea, Thomas Palaiologos, dressed with a blue garment and hat.

Despite the on-going conflict with Pius II, the Italian *condottiere* Sigismondo Malatesti, Lord of Rimini and cousin of Cleophe Malatesti, took part in the crusade and led an expedition against the Ottomans in an attempt to regain control of the region. He was in Morea from 1464 to 1465 under the leadership of Venice.¹⁸¹ The military mission was ultimately unsuccessful, but during its early stages, on 16 August 1464, Sigismondo managed to gain control of the city of Mystras and to put under siege its fortress.¹⁸² While reporting news to the Venetian Doge on the military campaign, Sigismondo's account provides information on the nature and the complexity of the fortification on top of the hill. He wrote, 'the so called land of Mixistra and the above rock is in three fortresses and two of them were kept by the enemies, the morning at dawn we took them [the two lower ones] [...]. Now it is left to take the rock, which, in order to clarify to Your Serenity how it is in few words, it looks like the one in Moncelese [Monselice near Padua] but its perimeter is four to five times bigger and stronger'.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Salvatore Settis and Donatella Toracca, eds., *La Libreria Piccolomini nel Duomo di Siena* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1998), esp. 118-23, 368-70; Mario Lorenzoni, ed., *Le pitture del Duomo di Siena* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milano: Silvana, 2008), esp. 166.

¹⁸¹ On the Venetian – Ottoman conflict of 1462-1479, see Jones, 'The Papal Reconquest'; Stantchev, 'DEVEDO'.

¹⁸² Soranzo, 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in Morea e le vicende del suo dominio.', esp. 231 at note n. 2. The letter by Sigismondo Malatesti was also sent in copy to the Duke of Milan. This copy of letter can be found in Bibliothèque National de France, Paris, *Carte Sforzesche*, Cod. 1590, c. 350 and it is transcribed in Appendice n. 2 in Soranzo, 279-80.

¹⁸³ Sigismondo Malatesti wrote, "[...] dicta terra del Mixistra ultra la rocha è in tre fortezze et duo ne tenevano li nemici, la matina in suso l'alba glie le tollimo et redussesse a la rocha tra Turchi et Giudei de le boche più de mille et non fo possibile a nui maçarglie (sic) la vita. Resta mo ad expugnare la rocha, la quale per dichiarare la Vostra Serenità come la sta in poche parole, sta como quella de

The citadel has a three-partite structure, the three *forteçe*, fortresses, are the three fortified walled sections: the lower one of the upper city, and the two of the actual fortress. In order to explain to the Doge what the citadel looked like, Sigismondo compared it to a similar citadel in the Veneto region, in the town of Monselice near Padua (Fig. 305).¹⁸⁴ The toponymy used by Sigismondo is the medieval name of the town. Monselice and its fortification were part of the possessions of the Venice Republic. It started to develop around the middle the thirteenth century and, at the time of Sigismondo's writing, consisted of a complex organised in three parts. To Sigismondo's eyes the citadel in Mystras looked familiar, similar to the one in Monselice but on a much larger scale.¹⁸⁵

Sigismondo's interest in the Morea is also signalled in Rimini. On the southwest exterior wall of the Tempio Malatestiano, starting from the northeast façade of the church and moving towards southeast, there are in sequence the tombs of Biasino da Parma, Giusto de' Conti, Georgios Gemistos Plethon and Roberto Valturio (Fig. 183). Plethon is therefore positioned on the third monumental arch on the side of the church, amongst the scholars who supported the Malatesti at the court in Rimini (Fig.

Moncelese, benchè de circuito sia quarto o cinque volte maggiore e in più forteçe", in Soranzo, 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in Morea e le vicende del suo dominio.', Appendice n. 2, 280.

¹⁸⁴ On Monselice, see in general Aldo Businaro, Simonetta Bonomi, and Cristiano Bulegato, *Monselice: la rocca, il castello: dalla Fondazione 'Giorgio Cini' alla Regione del Veneto* (Cittadella, PD: Biblos, 2003).

¹⁸⁵ Antoine Bon, 'Forteresses médiévales de la Grèce centrale', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 61 (1937): 136–208; Lock, 'The Frankish Towers of Central Greece'; Peter Lock, 'The Medieval Towers of Greece: A Problem in Chronology and Function', in *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (London: Frank Cass, 1989), 129–45. See also Timothy E. Gregory, 'People and Settlements of the Northeastern Peloponnese in the Late Middle Ages: An Archaeological Exploration', in *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 2013), 276–306. One of this Byzantine Medieval Tower has been photographically surveyed on 15/04/2015 during the April 2015 campaign conducted in the hills near Palio Pyrgo – Lakonia. See Appendix 03, 358–361. The images of this survey are not included in this dissertation.

184).¹⁸⁶ Plethon's monumental burial is accompanied by a commemorative inscription celebrating him as the 'prince of the philosophers of his time', who was brought here by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesti 'for [his] great love of the erudites' that inflamed him while fighting 'the war against the King of the Turks in the Peloponnese'.¹⁸⁷ At the end of the unsuccessful military campaign, aiming at the reconquering the Morea from the Ottomans,¹⁸⁸ Sigismondo Malatesti brought to Rimini the body of the Greek philosopher, who he may well have met in person in 1438 in Ferrara during the first part of the Ecumenical Council of Ferrara-Firenze. Sigismondo's first wife was Ginevra d'Este, daughter of Niccolò III d'Este, who was one the promoters of the Council. This close connection to the d'Este family, suggests that he might have been invited to the council in Ferrara, where we know Plethon was also present.¹⁸⁹

As part of the restoration project for Saint Francis's church, Sigismondo Malatesti commissioned the sequence of monumental burials on the exterior of the south wall (Fig. 183). The body of Plethon rests amongst these burials, as a praised member of the *pantheon* of intellectuals and scholars who helped and promoted the cultural

¹⁸⁶ On the intellectuals, in particular poets, and the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini see more recently Italo Pantani, 'I poeti del Tempio Malatestiano: amore, morte e neoplatonismo', *La Cultura*, 2006, 215–42.

¹⁸⁷ The epigraphy on Plethon's tomb, on the side of the Tempio Malatestiano, reads: "IEMISTII · BIZANTII · PHILOSOPHOR · SVA · TEMP · PRINCIPI · RELIQVVM · / SIGISMVNDVS · PANDVLFVS · MAL · PAN · F · BELLI · PELOP · ADVERSVS · TVRCOR · / REGEM · IMP · OB · INGENTEM · ERVDITORVM · OVO · FLAGRAT · AMOREM · / HVC · AFFERENDVM · INTROQVE · MITTENDVM · CVRAVIT · MCCCCLXV ·". On this epigraph see Ronchey, 'Bessarione poeta e l'ultima corte di Bisanzio', 1994, pp. 162–4; Gemistus Plethon and Neri, *Trattato delle virtù*, pp. 233–4; Blum, 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta (1417–1468): Stadtherr von Rimini, Neuheide und Verehrer Plethons'.

¹⁸⁸ Soranzo, 'Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in Morea e le vicende del suo dominio.'

¹⁸⁹ Lilia Gregorio Giraldi, a *ferrarese* erudite, on his *Two Dialogues on the poets of our times* provides an account on Plethon after his visit to Ferrara in 1438 see Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Dialogi duo de poetis nostrorum temporum - Due dialoghi sui poeti dei nostri tempi (1551)*, ed. Claudia Pandolfi (Ferrara: Corbo, 1999), 132–35. On the presence in Ferrara of Plethon, see also Bertozzi, 'Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e il mito del paganesimo antico: dal Concilio di Ferrara al Tempio Malatestiano di Rimini', esp. 86–89.

development and achievements of the Malatesti court, hence recognizing the centrality of the philosopher for the cultural agenda of the family and intellectual life of Rimini in the fifteenth century.¹⁹⁰

As seen with the case of the Venetian-Ottoman war that involved Sigismondo Malatesti, the Venetians maintain a strategic interest in Mystras all the way to the late seventeenth century, when they conquer it. There are a number of historical accounts of the region and the city by Venetian observers and travellers, which give us insight in their perception of the multicultural dimensions of the capital of Morea. In particular, two of these Venetians accounts, one from the late seventeenth century and one from the twenties of the eighteenth century, provide relevant portraits of the city for our purposes. A subsequent source of information, even though at times controversial, is the one provided by the survey activity of the Abbot Michel Fourmont, who in the thirties of the eighteenth century ventured in the Peloponnese to record its major sites and ancient epigraphs on behalf of the king of France Louis XV.¹⁹¹

The two Venetian accounts report the attempts by the Venice Republic to conquer the city of Mystras and its surroundings. The first of the two is by the Venetian

¹⁹⁰ A further evidence of the importance of the Plethon and of Greek culture at the court in Rimini is testified by the two identical Greek inscriptions, one on the north and the other on the south walls of the west side of the church. The inscriptions have also been associated with Ciriaco d'Ancona whose antiquarian interests for ancient epigraphy were partially informed by his visit to Mystras and his exchanges with Plethon. On the two inscriptions see Augusto Campana, 'Ciriaco d'Ancona e Lorenzo Valla sull'iscrizione greca del tempio dei Dioscuri a Napoli', *Archeologia Classica* 25-26 (1973-74) (1974): 84–102; Hope, 'The Early History of the Tempio Malatestiano', 89–90.

¹⁹¹ On Michel Fourmont and his 1729-30 travels in Greece and the Peloponnese, see Omont, *Missions archéologiques françaises en Orient aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, vol. 1, pp. 537-662; Morris, 'Liars, Eccentrics and Visionaries'. On the controversy and attributions related to some of his findings, see Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', esp. 293-6.

cosmographer Vincenzo Coronelli.¹⁹² In his historiographical memoirs on Morea and Negroponte, *Memorie Istoriografiche de' Regni della Morea, Negroponte, e Littorali sin'a Salonichi*, he describes the city, giving us a visual and textual ekphrasis, highlighting how, even as late as the seventeenth century when the city was under Ottoman rule, it was still understood as a multifaceted social, religious and economic urban environment (Fig. 231).¹⁹³

In the section about Mystras, *Misitra* for the Venetian cosmographer, Coronelli introduces it as the “nowadays Sparta” and explains that:

Four are the parts dividing this so called City, so that each one is entirely separated from the other and all together they form a body without joints.

The Castle [is] one, the Ground the other, and two boroughs, of which the first is named Mesokorion, or Middle Borough; the second

Exokorion, or Outer Borough, also named Maratche by the Turks.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Studies on Vincenzo Coronelli include *Vincenzo Coronelli nel terzo centenario dalla nascita* (Venezia: Comune di Venezia, 1950); Donatino Domini and Marica Milanese, eds., *Vincenzo Coronelli e l'Imago mundi* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998); Marica Milanese, Elena Fasano Guarini, and Mario Rosa, ‘Vincenzo Coronelli Veneziano (1650-1718). Informazione politica e produzione geografica in un cosmografo e poligrafo della fine del Seicento’, in *L'informazione politica in Italia (secoli XVI-XVIII): atti del seminario organizzato presso la Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, 23 e 24 giugno 1997* (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2001); Marica Milanese, ‘Vincenzo Coronelli: A Career’, *Globe Studies*, no. 57/58 (2011): 22–36.

¹⁹³ The first two editions of Coronelli's memoirs were published in Venice in 1686 and in Milan in 1687. They contain an extensive survey of the geographical sites and historical facts related to the Morea, see Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione*; Vincenzo Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche della Morea, Negroponte e Littorali sin' a' Salonichchi doue si descriuono tutte le prouincie, città, isole, costumi e molt'altre cose degne della notitia di ciascuno. Adornate di copiosi disegni in rame* (Milano: Giulio Francesco Zanetti, 1687). As early as 1687 a full English edition of the book appeared with translation of the Italian texts and illustration slightly different from the Italian edition, see Coronelli, *An Historical and Geographical Account of the Morea, Negropont, and the Maritime Places, as Far as Thessalonica: Illustrated with 42 Maps of the Countries, Plains, and Draughts of the Cities, Towns and Fortifications*.

¹⁹⁴ This translation is mine. In the Italian text Coronelli introduces the chapter on Mystras with the title “Sparta Hoggidi Misitra” and further down he describes the four neighbourhoods: ‘Quattro sono le parti, che dividono detta Città, così che l'una del tutto separata dall'altra formino assieme un corpo senza giunture. Il Castello una, la Terra l'altra, e due Borghi, de quali il prim'è chiamato Mesokorion, cioè Borgo di mezzo; Exokorion il secondo, cioè Borgo di fuori, chiamato anco da Turchi Maratche’,

The toponymy of the four main sections of the city shows how Italian, Greek and Turkish were used at the same time to describe the same parts of town. For instance, the outer part of the city was named both with the Greek *exokorion* as well as with its Turkish rendition *Maratche*. Furthermore, Coronelli writes:

The Castle named *to Castron* is seated on an Eminence, is of conical Figure, and has good walls; it had some years since ten Pieces of Artillery, and a Garrison of Eighteen or Twenty Janisaries Commanded by a Disdar that seldom resides there. The store houses, here located, are well provisioned with forages for military emergencies: it must be observed that each Turk has the obligation to annually renew the forage: there are also many cisterns, and in middle of the Castel there is a Mosque, at one time a Church of the Christians.¹⁹⁵

In his verbal and visual descriptions of the orographic features and Castle of Mystras, Coronelli speaks of his understanding of the role that the fortification had in the area (Fig. 231). The hill where Villehardouin built the fortress was strategic for all rulers in the region, whether Franks, Byzantines, Ottomans or Venetians. Coronelli points to the highly organized defensive environment, and provides evidence of the transformation of the fortress and of its premises after 1460 by the Ottomans. The

Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione*, 87.

¹⁹⁵ Coronelli, *An Historical and Geographical Account of the Morea, Negropont, and the Maritime Places, as Far as Thessalonica: Illustrated with 42 Maps of the Countries, Plains, and Draughts of the Cities, Towns and Fortifications*, 96. Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione*, 88. The Italian text quotes: 'Il Castello dicesi tò Castron, & è situato sopra Montagna erta in figura conica con muraglie assai, buone, nel quale poch'anni sono v'erano 10 pezzi di cannone con Guarniggione consistente in 18, ò 20 Gianizzeri comandanti da un Disdar, qual anco di raro vi rissiede. I magazzini, che quivi si ritrovano, sono ben provisionati di biade per l'urgenze militari: osservandosi; che ciascun Turco habbi il suo coll'obligatione di rinovar annualmente il grano: vi sono ancora alquante ccisterne, e nel mezzo del Castello v'è una Moschea, un tempo Chiesa de Christiani', Coronelli, 87-8.

latter converted the church within the walls of the fortress into a mosque (Fig. 306, Fig. 307, Fig. 308), while keeping auxiliary facilities such as the cisterns in place (Fig. 309). According to Coronelli's description, inside the fortress there were ten cannons and a garrison of eighteen to twenty *janissaries* commanded by a *Disdar*, the Ottoman governor, who occasionally resided in the fortress.¹⁹⁶ While the fortress went through several construction phases during subsequent dominations, it always preserved its strategic function, not only as a platform from whence to fight back the assaulting enemy, but also as a safe deposit for the food provisions of the city under siege.¹⁹⁷

Coronelli describes how the Ottoman authority collected grain, and kept it in special storerooms within the fortress, which was also furnished with cisterns for water.¹⁹⁸

One of the etchings Coronelli used to illustrate the chapter on Mystras shows a visual notation that iconographically represents a mosque standing exactly in the middle of the fortress (Fig. 231).¹⁹⁹ It is important to note that Coronelli's etching might represent the reverse view of the hill of Mystras, roughly as seen from the west of what is now called Magoula (Fig. 1). The notation visually signifying the mosque is a dome surrounded by a cornice, or what resembles a cornice, and supported by a curved wall (Fig. 306).²⁰⁰ The etching clearly shows the mosque inside the fortress and this notation appears other seven times in the illustration. So, in Coronelli's 1686

¹⁹⁶ On the *janissaries*, see Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, 'Les "Janissaires" de l'empereur Byzantin', in *Studia Turcologica Memoriae Alexii Bombaci Dicata* (Napoli: Istituto universitario orientale, Napoli, 1982), 591–97. On the origin of this denomination for this corp of the Ottoman army see Edmund A. Bowles, 'The Impact of Turkish Military Bands on European Court Festivals in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *Early Music* 34, no. 4 (2006): 533–59, esp. 533–4 and 554 n. 1.

¹⁹⁷ Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione*, 88.

¹⁹⁸ Coronelli, 88.

¹⁹⁹ Coronelli, 86.

²⁰⁰ A lesser simplified version of the iconographical notation used by Coronelli for depicting a mosque can be seen in the etching representing the city of Kalamata. See Coronelli, 66.

view it is possible to count at least eight landmarks, all recognizable as mosques: three are in the *Terra* area, around the despot's palace, three more in the *Mesokorion* and a final one in the *Exochorion*.

In one of the first archaeological surveys of the city, conducted in the late nineteenth century by Gabriel Millet (Fig. 299),²⁰¹ and later published in 1916, one can count seven major recognizable churches on the same side of the torrent running at the foothills of Mystras. A comparison between Coronelli's 1686 etching and Millet's 1916 survey map reveals correspondences between the relative positions of the mosques on the etching and the locations of the churches on the survey map. In Millet's plan, we can recognize the church of the Hagia Sophia, the Pantanassa and an unidentified mosque seen in Coronelli's etching in the *Terra* section, just below the fortress, while in the *Mesokorion* one can identify the churches of the Theotokos Hodegetria, Hagioi Theodoroi and Evangelistria. The church of Hagios Demetrios was probably not recorded as a mosque, since it functioned as the metropolitan see of Lakedaimonia during the Ottoman occupation.²⁰²

Based on this comparison, it might be assumed that some of the mosques in Ottoman Mystras were adapted from pre-existing Christian churches.²⁰³ As the case of the metropolitan church of Hagios Demetrios and the church of the fortress, some of the

²⁰¹ Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, fig. I (planche I).

²⁰² The presence in Mystras of the bishopric in the early eighteenth century is attested by Pietro Garzoni in his *History of the Venice Republic*. See Garzoni, *Istoria della Repubblica di Venezia in tempo della sacra lega contra Maometto IV., e tre suoi successori gran Sultani de' Turchi, (ove insieme narrasi la guerra per la successione delle Spagne al Re Carlo II.)*, libro V, 214. For the list of Orthodox bishops of the Lakedaimonia metropolitan jurisdiction, from the fifth to the early nineteenth century, see Giorgio Fedalto, ed., *Hierarchy ecclesiastica orientalis: series episcoporum ecclesiarum christianarum orientalium* (Padova: Messaggero, 1988), vol. I, 505-7.

²⁰³ This is also what Coronelli reposts about the church that once was built inside the fortress. See Coronelli, *Memorie istoriografiche de' regni della Morea, Negroponte, e littorali sin'a Salonichi; accresciute in questa seconda edizione*, 88.

churches in Mystras were either transformed into mosques or still used as Christian religious sites during the Ottoman occupation.

The survey of Mystras, which Abbot Fourmont conducted in the seventies of the eighteenth century, reinforces this reading of the Ottoman city. At folio 50 of the *Ms. Gr. 853* in the Bibliothèque National de France, Fourmont drew a view of the city, as seen from the Eurota valley while looking towards northwest (Fig. 310).²⁰⁴ This depiction of the hill and the city of Mystras has not been yet recognized by other scholars and it shows the main urban features of the city, along with its major architectural landmarks, which Coronelli provided in a more descriptive and rather schematic fashion. Fourmont's drawing shows the defensive features, the fortress and remains of the city walls, along with the infrastructure of the palace of the despot, the main convents of the Brontocheion, Pantanassa, and Peribleptos, as well as three mosques that were distributed in the upper and lower town. The latter are clearly distinct from the Orthodox establishments underscoring the cohabitation of diverse religious groups in the city, at least as late as the eighteenth century (Fig. 311).

Cohabitation of two different religious groups in Mystras was not an exception in the context of the Ottoman Empire, and in fact the two groups might have been integrated, given that monasteries and mosques were both present in the city and used by its religious communities, as seen in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Michel Fourmont, *Supplément grec 853*, [manuscript, papier. - 51 fol. - Grand format], Bibliothèque National de France, fol. 50

²⁰⁵ After the Ottoman conquest of Crete 'the Greek Orthodox population got an easier break from the Muslim masters at Istanbul than from the Catholic ones at Venice; fiscal administration was less debilitating; commercial-economic integration in the Ottoman world of the eastern Mediterranean became fuller than it had been under the Venetian rule', in Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians*

The conversion of Christian temples into mosques, although not always encouraged, was regulated by the Ottoman central authority, soon after the Ottoman conquest.²⁰⁶

In Constantinople, right after conquest, Mehmed II converted a total of six churches into mosques.²⁰⁷ If Coronelli's historical account and Fourmont's drawing are accurate, there were almost an equal number of Christian and Muslim establishments at the end of the eighteenth century in Mystras.

If the number of mosques can be used as a parameter for the presence in the city of a large Turkish community, another Venetian source testifies to the importance that the Christian community still had in the seventeenth century. In 1720 Pietro Garzoni, a Venetian senator, published a *History of the Venice Republic*.²⁰⁸ Garzoni reports on the war and negotiation between the Venetians and the Ottomans over possession of the city of Mystras in 1687.²⁰⁹ In the report Garzoni provides the reader with an account of the coexistence of the two religious identities in the city, along with a description of the city and its region.

While giving an account of the siege of the city of 1687, Garzoni also offers an important piece of information in regards to the Orthodox community, the presence in Mystras of an active archbishop: 'in Mystras resides the Greek archbishop, and he

and *Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 77.

²⁰⁶ After the fall of Constantinople 'Mehmed II converted six churches to mosques [...]. Although a shari'a banned the construction of new churches in Muslims neighbourhoods and restricted their repairs, arbitrary demolition or appropriation of a church [...] that was intact or in use was discouraged', in Nur Altinyildiz, 'The Architectural Heritage of Istanbul and the Ideology of Preservation', *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 281–305, 282.

²⁰⁷ Altinyildiz.

²⁰⁸ This is the translation into English of the Italian title *Istoria della Repubblica Veneziana*, See Garzoni, *Istoria della Repubblica di Venezia in tempo della sacra lega contra Maometto IV., e tre suoi successori gran Sultani de' Turchi, (ove insieme narrasi la guerra per la successione delle Spagne al Re Carlo II.)*.

²⁰⁹ See 'Libro Quinto', Garzoni, 213–4, 262–3.

keeps signing himself as Metropolitan of Lacedemone'.²¹⁰ In fact, the archbishopric of Mystras was still operational in the late seventeenth century, run by an Orthodox bishop in charge of the whole Lakedaimon province.²¹¹

The complexity of the urban culture of the city can also be inferred through its positioning as an economic centre in the region. Garzoni's account offers an insight in its prosperous economy and its surroundings. Mystras is described as:

[...] it might be of great value the mistake of the ones who believe the city to be born from the ashes of Sparta, as it is valuable [for Mystras] the proximity to those famous ruins. Mistrà is built on the crest of a high mountain of oblong shape and it dominates a fertile countryside fifteen miles long, and four in five wide, full of grain, vineyards, silks, fruits, and the most delightful of Morea.²¹²

This short description shows how Venetians might have perceived the economic importance of this part of the Peloponnese in the late seventeenth century, economic importance that we described at the beginning of the chapter in the context of the Palaiologan political project for Mystras. In the late seventeenth century, merchants, especially Venetians, must have been trading goods in and out of Mystras with

²¹⁰ This is my translation from the Italian text: 'In Mistrà l'arcivescovo Greco soggiorna, e continua à sottoscrivere Metropolitano di Lacedemone', in Garzoni, 214.

²¹¹ See list of bishops in Fedalto, *Hierarchia ecclesiastica orientalis*, vol. I, 505-7.

²¹² This is my translation from Italian text: '[...] riesca à questa [Mystras] di pregio l'equivoco d'alcuni, che sia rinata da ceneri di Sparta, ò la prossimità delle famose ruine. Mistrà fabbricata sul dorso d'un'alto monte in figura bislunga domina fertile campagna di quindici miglia di lunghezza, e larga quattro in cinque, copiosa di biade, vini, sete, frutta, e la più dilettevole della Morea. Vi scaturiscono frequenti, e dolci fontane, e il fiume Eurota, che hà la sua sorgente in una montagna otto miglia sopra Sparta, passa per mezzo della stessa campagna fino al mare. Scorgonsi due miglia distanti le reliquie della vera Sparta, ovvero Lacedemone, che siede sopra piccola collina scendendo, e stendendosi al piano', in Garzoni, *Istoria della Repubblica di Venezia in tempo della sacra lega contra Maometto IV., e tre suoi successori gran Sultani de' Turchi, (ove insieme narrasi la guerra per la successione delle Spagne al Re Carlo II.)*, 214.

different parts of the Mediterranean and the presence of Venetian merchants, who were typically also involved in financial activities, is reported already from the early fifteenth century.²¹³

Mystras enjoyed a significant level of interest from the Republic of Venice and its allies continued during the Ottoman Empire.²¹⁴ We can find evidence of this interest in the heart of Venice itself. In the hall of the Maggior Consiglio of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice a large triumphal arch closes the wall corresponding to the façade facing the Biblioteca Marciana. This triumphal arch by Andrea Tirali celebrates the Doge Francesco Morosini, named “Peloponnesiaco”, after his conquest of Morea in the Peloponnesiac War of 1685-87 (Fig. 312A-B).²¹⁵

V.4.b Romanticizing Mystras

Scholarly interest in both Mystras and the Peloponnese, and their Byzantine architectural and artistic heritage, has a long tradition, which encompasses over two centuries of research and investigations conducted by scholars of different nationalities and languages. The three-volume *Travels to Morea* published in 1830 by William M. Leake is one of the earliest travel accounts of the nineteenth century that presents the Peloponnese in its complexity.²¹⁶ Leake’s account is important for

²¹³ See in general Julian Chrysostomides, *Byzantium and Venice, 1204-1453: Collected Studies*, ed. Michael E. Heslop and Charalambos Dendrinos (Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2011).

²¹⁴ For an introduction to the Morea affairs, see ‘The early years of Palaiologan rule in the Morea (1382-1407)’ and ‘The final years of Byzantine Morea (1407-1460)’, in Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 235-84.

²¹⁵ On the Venetian conquest of the Peloponnese and the consequences of the conquest see Gaetano Cozzi, ‘La Repubblica di Venezia in Morea: Un diritto per il nuovo Regno (1685-1715)’, in *L’età dei lumi: Studi storici sul settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, vol. 2 (Naples, 1985), 739–89; Alexis Malliaris, ‘Population Exchange and Integration of Immigrant Communities in the Venetian Morea, 1687-1715’, *Hesperia Supplements* 40 (2007): 97–109, esp. 97 n. 2.

²¹⁶ William Martin Leake, *Travels in the Morea. With a Map and Plans*, 3 vols (London: J. Murray, 1830).

its way of looking at the whole cultural landscape of the area, rather than just its ancient Greek heritage, previously studied by surveying campaigns such as the one published by David Le Roy in his 1758 *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grece*.²¹⁷

The exploration of the city of Mystras by Gabriel Millet marks the first systematic cataloguing of the heritage of the city.²¹⁸ It is worth noting that while Millet conducted his survey, the “Byzantine Research Fund” [BRF] from Britain also sent surveyors to document the architecture of Mystras. The survey materials produced by the BRF were not published but are still available at the British School in Athens [BSA] (Table 30 Figg. 40-43, Table 33 Figg. 52-57). It is worth noting that the arts and crafts movement then fashionable in England provides a context for the interest of the English in Mystras.²¹⁹

The Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA] Archive, at the Victorian & Albert Museum in London, keeps epistolary exchanges between members of the BRF working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century at the BSA, such as Robert W. Schultz, William Harvey and Walter S. George, with RIBA’s members, that shed light on the interest for Byzantine architecture in Mystras and the competition between French and English scholars.²²⁰ In particular, a postcard letter written on 30

²¹⁷ Le Roy, *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grece*; for an English edition see David Le Roy, *The Ruins of the Most Beautiful Monuments of Greece* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2004).

²¹⁸ Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l’étude de l’architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*.

²¹⁹ Amalia G. Kakissis, ‘The Byzantine Research Fund Archive: Encounters of Arts and Crafts Architects in Byzantium’, *British School at Athens Studies* 17 (2009): 125–144. For general information on the BRF Archive see:

http://www.bsa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=185

²²⁰ The letters to RIBA by Robert W. Schultz, William Harvey and Walter S. George, who were members of the BRF, are in: *Letters by the British School at Athens to the RIBA, 1887-1904*, part of

November 1908, from Ormonde M. Dalton of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum to Walter George, informed the latter that Millet is about to publish his book on Mystras, and gives us a glimpse of the connections between French and English scholars at that time.

On an unpublished postcard sent to George on 30 Nov 1908 Dalton wrote: '[Top centre stamped on the card] "Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities / and Ethnography, / British Museum, / London: W. C."; [handwritten - line 5] '30.XI.1908 / Dear W. George, / All that I can learn / from M. Millet is that his / work on Mistra is expected / to appear next year: he / says that he is including / "the palaces, houses and fortresses" / as well as the churches, / and that in his text he / intends to deal with seculars architecture at / some length. / Yours very truly, / O. M. Dalton'²²¹

On the back of the same unpublished postcard, George scribbled the beginning of his reply to Dalton, and from what he wrote it transpires that he wants to see Millet in Paris and that it is necessary to appraise Robert W. Schultz, the other member of the BRF. It says 'Dear Mr. Dalton. / Thanks very much / for your post. Card. / I ... [?] / It would perhaps be best if / ... [?] I try [?] to / see M Millet in Paris on my way / ...[?] / Does M Schultz / ... [?] the result of your / inquiry?', and again on the bottom part of the postcard 'If M Millet is including so / much I must try to see / him on my way ...[?] / Does Mr Schultz / know the result of / your enquiry.'²²²

the "RIBA Archive: Letters to Council, 1835-1907", Box 31 - Folder 3 - LC/31/3/1-54, RIBA Archive, Victoria & Albert Museum, London; *Walter George Papers*, GeW/1/1-3, RIBA Archive, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

²²¹ In "Postcard letter sent to George on 30 Nov 1908", in *Walter George Papers* GeW/1/1 – Box I – Folder 7, recto, RIBA Archive, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

²²² In "Postcard letter sent to George on 30 Nov 1908", in *Walter George Papers* GeW/1/1 – Box I – Folder 7, verso, RIBA Archive, Victoria & Albert Museum, London

It is the competition seemingly arising between the BRF and Millet, both rushing to publish their respective surveys, that marks the beginning of modern academic work on Mystras.

After the publication of his catalogue, Millet subsequently published in 1916 his research on the iconography of the gospels, comparing monuments in Mystras, in Macedonia and on Mount Athos.²²³ The research contextualized the paintings of Mystras and of the region as a Greek phenomenon, clearly of Byzantine-orthodox origin, but one in which he recognized distinctive traits. This comparative study was accompanied by a contemporaneous book on Greek architecture, also published in 1916.²²⁴ In summary Millet's scholarship was oriented towards recognizing, in the art of the Peloponnese and in particular in that of Mystras, a principle of autonomy.

French scholarship was also devoted to the study of Morea, but as a place formerly controlled by the Franks. Antoine Bon published the most extensive historical survey of Frankish Morea in 1969.²²⁵ This study surveyed and analysed the Morea from the lens of the Frankish occupation, linking together historical events of the Principality of Achaëa with the art, architecture and archaeology of the Peloponnese, leaving aside the Byzantine presence in the region.

Greek art and architectural historical scholarship on Mystras also developed in the first half of the twentieth century, in particular with Anastasios Orlandos, who was mostly interested in architectural history. His 1937 essay on *The Palaces and Houses*

²²³ Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*.

²²⁴ Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*.

²²⁵ Bon, *La Morée franque; recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205-1430)*.

of *Mystras* is the first on non-religious architecture of the city of Mystras.²²⁶

According to Kostis Kourelis, Orlandos' essay had the merit of having 'lifted a heavy veil of ignorance that covered Byzantine domestic architecture'.²²⁷ However, it failed to produce a scientific analysis of the domestic architecture of the city, because it lacked a scientific archaeological methodology. Rather, it fulfilled the idea of a romanticised Byzantine city, de facto supporting the repackaging of Mystras 'as a site of Hellenic nationalism'.²²⁸

²²⁶ Ορλάνδος, 'Τα παλάτια και σπίτια του Μυστρά'. The essay has been recently reprinted as a book, see Αναστάσιος Κ. Ορλάνδος, *Τα παλάτια και τά σπίτια τοῦ Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Αρχαιολογική Ἑταιρεία, 2000).

²²⁷ Kourelis, 'Byzantine Houses and Modern Fictions Domesticating Mystras in 1930s Greece', 299.

²²⁸ Kourelis writes: '[...] the site of Mystras was first deployed to legitimize European colonialism in the eastern Mediterranean of the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, Greece and its state-sponsored intellectuals had to repackage Mystras as a site of Hellenic nationalism. As with the European Gothic Revival, the Byzantine discovery of Mystras occurred in a Romantic space, engaged with both literary and material culture. As literature was translated into monuments, Mystras took centre stage in the need to experience the Middle Ages directly. Finally, the houses of Mystras played an important role in naturalizing modernist architecture and transforming the urban character of twentieth century Greece', in Kourelis, 302. Kourelis finds the vision of Mystras proposed by Orlandos problematic, as does Tito Papamastorakes. See Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists'.

VI Conclusions

VI.1 The significance of this dissertation

This dissertation focused on how the artistic production of Mystras can be interpreted as a set of indices of the agency of three Latin *basilissai*, wives of the Despots that lived in Mystras between 1349, when the first despot of Morea was appointed, and 1460, when the city was given to the Ottomans.

For some time, most studies on the artistic production of Mystras have indicated its characteristics of innovation and exceptionality, but these characteristics have typically been read in relation to the art of the major Byzantine cultural centres, and in particular in relation to Constantinople. Thus, previous art-historical approaches to Mystras have represented its artistic production during the late period as a unique, exceptional case, read within the Byzantine tradition. Over the last three decades a number of studies have made significant contributions to these approaches.

Drandakes brought to the attention of the scholarship a collection of materials previously not considered. Mouriki expanded the approach by analysing Mystras' frescoes and integrating Orthodox Byzantine tradition alongside heterodox elements. Kalopissi-Verti expanded on frescoes of the late period but focused on a broader context. Gerstel and Kappas added a layered understanding of the artistic landscape of the region, connecting local artistic realizations to the broader Moreote context.¹

In previous work, multiple scholars have indeed recognized elements that reflected a relationship between different, communicating cultures, and which clearly take into

¹ See above ch. I.3 - Existing scholarship on Mystras' cultural production, 28-28

account different visual traditions. However, what is not usually done, is to attempt to identify which specific elements and components of the artistic production should be used to support this comparison, and which specific agencies can be abducted from them as indices.² Multiple observers note how Mystras is different, that its art speaks to a wider context, one which Millet reads in relation to Orthodox art of the late fourteenth and fifteenth century. But no observer looks for the specific historic circumstances that might have determined the visual formulation of specific materials, such as iconographic solutions that represent members of the imperial family, the contribution of travellers in the manuscript production, or the use of emblems and coat of arms of the stone elements in the churches.

We heed Michele Bacci's warning when he says: 'Scholars have had difficulty in recognizing the importance of cross-cultural exchange and have failed to work out appropriate terms to define such phenomena as the different forms of stylistic juxtaposition, synthesis, or hybridization. It is only recently, partly as a consequence of post-modern rhetoric on globalization and multiculturalism, that art historians have started rethinking the issue, by focusing especially on the multi-confessional, multi-ethnic, and multi-layered societies of the medieval Mediterranean. However, this new approach and increased emphasis on synthesis may also prove to be misleading if the identification of these characteristics results in an indiscriminate exaltation of artistic convergence, deprived of a deeper understanding of the social, religious, cultural, and even 'technical' dynamics underlying the blending and combination of forms'.³

² See above I.4 - The methodology, 95

³ Michele Bacci, 'Some Thoughts of Greco-Venetian Artistic Interactions in Fourteenth and Early-Fifteenth Centuries', in *Wonderful Things: Byzantium through Its Art*, ed. Antony Eastmond and Liz James (Ashgate, 2013), 203–27, 205.

In this dissertation, we seek that ‘deeper understanding’ and look for the specific objects that have absorbed this plurality of contexts, and attempt to explain which models might have been chosen for them and what might have been the historical reasons for the influence, or the cultural debate behind these models. The analytical approach of this dissertation attacks this problem by introducing the geopolitics of the late empire, in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, as seen through the diplomatic relationships and dynastic alliances that intersect the courts of the Kantakouzenoi and Palaiologoi in Mystras during the last few decades of the empire. For over one hundred years, members of important courts of the time resided in Mystras as wives of the Byzantine despots. This continuous presence at court of Latin *basilissai* makes Mystras unique. This fact of course has been explored from a historical perspective, but what has not been fully analysed is how this presence has had an impact on the cultural production of the court.

The Latin *basilissai* are marginalized figures in a mainstream historical sense. And if one wants to examine historical issues pertaining to these female figures when not enough documentary material is available, one must rely on heterogeneous materials. This is certainly true for the artistic production related to them, as the absence of primary sources that tell us who the artists were, which were the workshops, who were the merchants that brought the materials makes this analysis complex. All we have is extremely sporadic information on the specific historical circumstances. The focus on agency, and how to detect it, is therefore central to the approach of this dissertation. It is grounded in Gell’s anthropology of art, and builds on a number of fields – psychology, semiotics, aesthetics – to create agency hierarchies which make

explicit the logic chain connecting different agents. The agency relationship is based on a cognitive process of abduction, which is the way in which the patient identifies the agency through an index. It is a form of inference distinct from induction or deduction.⁴

In the case of the objects examined in this dissertation, what was abducted was not always the agency of the wives of the Despots: in some cases the Latin women are the principal agent while in others they are a secondary agent in a much more articulated chain of inference. For example, specific artistic products in Italy may exercise the agency of their sponsors on travellers who observe them, and they in turn might then become agents themselves, as patrons of other indices. Through this approach we can construct a series of logical steps that link the Latin women in Mystras and their courts of origin to the production in the city.

The anthropological toolkit is complemented with historical analysis where possible and with a number of comparisons that allow us to identify which abductive processes are actually historically relevant. And so, we either seek to identify a similar process of abduction in art objects in other contexts, for example by comparing images of women in Mystras with those found in Italy in the same period, or we look for the same process of abduction across different types of objects in the same context, from pictorial programmes to architectural elements. Comparative evidence from across Italy reveal a common evolution, which can be explained in the context of the demographic and economic transition of fourteenth century Europe.

⁴ See above ch. I.4 - The methodology, esp. 32

Through a number of examples, we reinforce what may be only barely detectable through a single example.

Searching for these agency relationships, placing the innovative details within their context, requires looking at a multiplicity of objects, and, of these objects, details that are at the margins of the mainstream interests of history of art. We considered details of architectural design and use of buildings, details of frescoes of religious subjects without necessarily concentrating on the iconographical rendition of main religious subjects itself, material culture objects with important visual elements, documents, details with which are represented historical characters in the frescoes. These details, at the margins of the main art historical interests when dealing with religious art, here become the main focus of the research and are for the first time related to the agency of the wives of the Despots and the broader cultural, economic and geopolitical context that extends beyond the limits of the Byzantine court in Mystras.

This dissertation reveals the effects that inter-faith marriages between the despots and Latin *basilissai* had on the indices represented by the visual production of the city. Through the agency of these three women, not only 'Byzantine art was an aspect of the renaissance world' as pointed out by Lyn Rodley but, I would argue, early renaissance art was an aspect of the Byzantine world as well.⁵

The heart of this dissertation is a sequence of analyses that goes from indices of the primary agency of the Latin wives of the despots, such as appropriations through

⁵ Lyn Rodley, 'The Byzantine Context', in *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe* (Ashgate, 2013), 9–35, p. 35.

sculpted coat of arms, to the analysis of depicted individuals, fashion, architectural details, and the broader architectural and urban design, to reconstruct the routes through which the agency of these women and of their courts of origin manifested itself. It is worth noting that this is not an approach based on a gender studies lens, which would have approached the production differently. In this study – similar to those of different periodization – the visual confronts the historical, and material culture helps us to understand documentary sources, dealing with a broad range of sources and materials: design and architectural details, fresco and sculptured decorations, archaeological and literary evidence.⁶ It employs a historical and cultural approach, a *Kulturgeschichte*, which interweaves the cultural values of different objects with the histories of the capital of the Byzantine Despotate of Morea and that of three of the Catholic women at the court. This approach introduces new questions and previously overlooked elements in the study of the artistic production of the late period, and, in particular, sheds new light on the role of these three women, as active agents and epitomes of the culturally multi-layered late Palaiologan society.

VI.2 New contributions made by this dissertation

A number of new contributions have been identified in the process of constructing the analysis. Many of these rely on formal analyses of art products at a level of detail that is uncommon. The examinations of the Lusignan monogram, the fleur-de-lis, the Annunciation in the Pantanassa, the donor portrait in the Peribleptos, Cleophe's letters, Ciriaco's drawing, the architecture of the palace complex and urban design are all conducted to extract the most information from several levels of analysis. For

⁶ Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680-850*; Gerstel, *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese*, 2013.

example, Cleophe's letters are not examined only for their content but also for the choice of paper, for the watermarks, for the calligraphy. In this dissertation, this level of detail is necessary to reveal the core argument of this thesis. It is at that level that the discrepancies with the traditional historiographical narrations that are available in the literature become evident. Without pursuing that level of detail it is not possible to identify and reveal the full complexity of the artistic production of the city. In fact, one of the new contributions of this dissertation is documentary. Due to the need to look at the architecture and the frescoes in Mystras at a high level of detail, two photographic campaigns were conducted in 2013 and 2015 in order to collect quality images of the objects studied.

During the course of this work we have also examined materials or made links between materials that were never confronted before. These objects reveal a cultural context that shows both the seam of the imperial visual culture but also traces of the exchanges with the culture of the Western courts. In many instances the scrutiny of different indices at an increasing level of detail reveal multiple co-existing agencies that allow us to see known objects in a new light. And it is in this context that several new findings have been presented throughout this dissertation.

Chapter two presents a series of heterogeneous indices that collectively provide a footprint for the presence of the Latin *basilissai* in the art production of Mystras. Due to the lack of primary sources documenting these women at court, their presence and their historical role has been left in the shadow by mainstream scholarship up to now. This chapter identifies their presence and parts of their histories at the late Byzantine

court by discussing indices, which become opportunities to better understand both the histories of these women and the historical context where they lived.

Several iconographic details in the scene of the Birth of Virgin allow us to detect the relationship of the *basilissai* to the court and the web of expectations that derive from that, which lead to multiple agent-patient relationships, those of the court on the Latin princesses, those of the Latin princesses on the court, and those between the court and the community. These details include references to the importance of *basilissai* as child bearers for the imperial dynasty: the centrality of the cult of Saint Anne in a historical moment with a high number of women dying due to child bearing complications; the elaborate and rich rendition of the scene in the Peribleptos and Hagia Sophia, both closely linked to the family of the despot; the inclusion of the scene in a separate chapel in Hagia Sophia, founded as the palace church. Even though this interpretation can not be definitive — we lack for instance dedicatory inscriptions or primary sources supporting an unequivocal reading of the indices in these specific frescoes — the particular context that would represent this web of agencies, is supported in the following chapter by our examination of Cleophe Malatesti's distressing experience at court and her death from child birth complications, as recorded by Demetrios Pepagomenos' funerary oration.

The double donor portrait in the Peribleptos provides further evidence of the direct agency of the Latin *basilissai* in the interpretation offered in this chapter. The depiction of the female figure is identified differently than previously argued in the literature. That interpretation along with the recognition of the coat of arms of the Acciaiuoli on the Peribleptos provide evidence of the direct acts of patronage of the

despot's wives on major architectures of the city. The economic and international conditions behind these dynastic alliances provide an explanation for why these women would have had the power and the license – despite being foreign agents – to exercise such acts. This is further supported by the identification of the monogram of the Lusignan on an architrave, suggesting an act of self-promotion on the part of at least one of the *basilissai* as a veritable ruler.

The last part of chapter two expands the search of indices of this agency to the depiction of fashion. The proximate rationale is an archaeological find of a female dress and textile closely associated to the court and its correspondence in several details of depicted female fashion. Comparisons with Italian depictions of the same period allows us to see the relationship between fashion trends in different courts and support the idea that the agency of the Latin *basilissai* was also expressed through these more societal trends.

To emphasize the ungended nature of the analytic argument, the examination is extended to depicted male fashion. The fact that Western elements of fashion could be seen on male depictions at an imperial court where the attire for male members of the court was so codified as was the case for the late Byzantine court is a clear indication that exogenous elements like the Latin wives were exercising their agency on their community. According to this original interpretation, details from the funerary portrait of the unknown male figure in the southeast funerary chapel in the church of Hagioi Theodoroi reveal how this unknown figure wears a costume that is closer to Western costumes, and a fashion shared with the West. Similarly, the funerary portrait of Manuel Palaiologos also shows a Western costume, according to

this analysis. This type of costumes are linked to the fashion of the time of the places of origin of the wives of the despots.

The third chapter of this study contributes to further refine the understanding of the historical and central role of the Catholic Latin women at the court of Mystras, with the assistance of documentary evidence. A selection of primary and literary sources already known in secondary literature and produced at the time of the presence in the city of one of these women, Cleophe Malatesti, as well as in relation to her, are analysed and discussed in relation to material cultural information embedded in these documents. The set of letters written by Cleophe Malatesti to her sister Paola in Mantua, the codex *Mut. Gr. 144* and the funerary orations written in her memory become the opportunity to investigate the connections and the exchanges between the cultural milieu of Mystras and intellectuals linked to both the Malatesti family as well as to courts where members of the family were engaged. The chapter addresses in a new way the roles of intellectuals such as Georgios Gemistos Plethon, Demetrios Raul Kabakes, Bessarion, Guarino da Verona and Ciriaco d'Ancona.

In this chapter I introduce a calligraphic examination that compares the first letter to the subsequent ones written by Cleophe. Similarly, in this chapter I also examine specific watermarks in relation to the circulation of paper in those decades. It is interesting to note that we point out the similarity in the nature of the watermarks, and therefore of the paper, between the letters and some sections of the codex *Mut. Gr. 144*. The codex is a product of Mystras' erudition. Within it, a drawing of Ciriaco d'Ancona is analysed in relation to the writings contained in the codex, in particular with a connection to the virtue of temperance, which I demonstrate to be

connected to the elephant shown in the drawing. I also point out how that very issue of virtues is a common theme of investigation and erudition shared by both the intellectuals at the Malatesti court in Rimini and the ones in Mystras.⁷

In chapter four we continue on the rich seam offered by the relationship between Ciriaco d'Ancona and the court of Mystras. Ciriaco is an important route into the complex architecture of relationships that surrounded the Latin *basilissai*. He had deep connections to the Italian courts of origin of the Latin women, he was a traveller who was exposed to the court of Mystras, and directly interacted with some of its intellectuals, and had a keen interest in artistic production, filtered through the lens of his antiquarian interests.

In this chapter, we establish a link between the attention devoted to characterize architectural details in the cycle of Hagios Demetrios and the idea of antiquity, which takes a visual form of antiquarianism within the cultural circles in Mystras. We examine examples that have never been fully considered in depth before, such as the architectural backdrop with columns in front a containing wall and superimposed orders of columns of the Annunciation in the church of the Pantanassa. In this dissertation, we relate this rendered architecture to the role of the Theotokos as “spring of life” and to local antiquities and to the architecture of ancient Sparta. The chapter considers a series of details that are re-examined and for the first time linked: the historical testimonies of Ciriaco d'Ancona visiting the antiquities of Sparta with members of the court in Mystras are read in association with a drawing by Giuliano

⁷ The drawing by Ciriaco d'Ancona with the iconography of the elephant in the codex Mut. Gr. 144 has been recently discussed in Andrea Mattiello, ‘The Elephant on the Page: Ciriaco d'Ancona in Mystras’, in *Cross-Cultural Interaction Between Byzantium and the West, 1204-1669: Whose Mediterranean Is It Anyway?*, ed. Angeliki Lymberopoulou (Milton: Routledge, 2018), 203–16.

da Sangallo, which copies a previous, and now lost, drawing by Ciriaco d'Ancona, where a superimposed order of columns with capitals and an inscribed architrave are shown. The inscription bears a name that we have identified in the theatre in Sparta. So, we can say that when Ciriaco visited Sparta in the thirties and forties of the fifteenth century — roughly the time when the decoration of the Pantanassa church was carried out — he probably saw a building with an order of columns and long trabeation in front a wall and of superimposed order of columns, which could have served as model for the architectural background in the Annunciation in the Pantanassa.

Finally, in chapter five we expand the angle of the examination to the most macroscopic indices: the palace, the urban design of Mystras, and the reflections on Mystras of subsequent travellers, to further consolidate the indices of the agency of the Latin *basilissai*.

The palace's evolution is seen as an index of the Latin *basilissai*, particularly through its relationship to Venetian architecture and to the historical context that would have prompted its development. The agency of the *basilissai* is seen in the Western characteristic of this imperial project. One of the most recognizable Western characteristics is the square, which is argued in this dissertation to be not just the response to a commercial need at a time of economic difficulty for the empire, but also as an identifier of a new relationship between the community and the imperial power, in contrast to the structure of Constantinopolitan palaces which are typically closed to the public.

We examine the further construction of buildings in Mystras, including documentary evidence of Venetian support for the construction of a church. This is further evidence of the commercial and geopolitical relationship established between the polities at the heart of which are the Latin *basilissai*. Further specific evidence of this is the decoration of the *katholikon* of the Pantanassa commissioned by the *protostrator* Ioannes Phrangopoulos, which reflects the choice of Western decorative elements tied to the court of origin of Cleophe Malatesti.

Finally, we discuss how Mystras is observed after Byzantium by Venetian travellers linked to the conquest of Morea at the end of the seventeenth century, in whose accounts the echoes of the relationship between the Latin courts and the imperial court still reverberate. We discuss the seventeenth-century notebook of the survey of Morea by Michel Fourmont, in which he draws a view that for the first time we identify as being Mystras. We close chapter five with a short exploration of the Byzantine Research Fund and the role the surveyors have in re-establishing modern interest in Mystras.

VI.3 Meaning and implications of this work

The significant acts of patronage made in the city, and what we have today, is a universe of signs that must be interpreted, not only in terms of their religious content, but also in terms of the wider spectrum of the cultural interests these signs reflect, and in terms of the individuals they refer to who were active in Mystras during the almost one-hundred years between 1349, the year of the establishment of the Despotate, and the closing years of the Council of Ferrara and Florence. The

dissertation makes use of materials as diverse as architecture, fresco decoration and material culture elements that are clearly also heterogeneous. By using art to make a fundamentally historical point about the agency of the Latin *basilissai*, this dissertation gives a particularly vivid representation of the forces at work in the context of Mystras during those particular decades.

It is a world in which there could have either been or not been an end to the schism between the two churches. In fact we know that a debate between the unionists and non-unionists was a very live debate in those years. In those decades the possibility of a union was indeed seriously contemplated. The attempt to reunite the Orthodox and Catholic churches took concrete form with the Council of Ferrara and Florence. The despots of Morea appear to be particularly concerned, as they travel around the West, to take active part in this attempt of reunification as well as to look for help against the Ottoman expansion. Certainly, the fact that all the despots of those years marry Catholic women reinforces this orientation.

And if it is true that Constantinople keeps both tendencies alive, in a city like Mystras which has signs of difference so alive and evident, a city that is also far from the centre of the Empire, a new world appears to be contemplated, a more open world in which opposed elements are resolved. This work pulls together visual and architectural elements counterbalancing the intellectual production of the scholars gathered in Mystras around Georgios Gemistos Plethon. What he and others seem to suggest in their writings, advising the despot of Morea, is a reform of the Byzantine state towards a state formation taking elements from the Byzantine state, from the Ottoman state, and from the feudal and princely system of the West. In this sense the

visual culture mirrors these ideas. What is proposed by the intellectuals, as recognized in the writings of Plethon and which informs his thinking, is a spirit that can also be perceived in the materials that have been examined in this dissertation, and explains them in the context of the court of Mystras.

This dissertation, for the first time, attempts to explain from a visual cultural angle the cultural production of the court of Mystras, in terms of the agency of the Latin *basilissai*, showing that the complexity that can be detected in heterogeneous details of the manufactured objects is an index that leads us back through varying lengths of abduction to their courts of origin. In this work we research the historical nature of this artistic production.

The history of art focusing on Byzantine visual culture concentrates predominately on its religious aspects, due not only to the abundance of art objects pertaining to religious practices, but also because we predominantly have historical sources — textual, liturgical and documentary — complementing and commenting those practices throughout the centuries of existence of the Byzantine Empire. But this focus is biased by the nature of these sources.

This thesis is about the analysis of visual artefacts on the grounds of a broader historical analytical setting, where religious, social, economic and aesthetic parameters are equally considered. What of the past remains embedded on any given object, from a visual and architectural point of view, cannot be read solely through the lens of one of the subjects — the produce or the user — related to them, but must be inserted within the dynamics that have forged those objects. The application of an

anthropological and historical approach has allowed us to detect complex chains of agency behind the cultural production of the city. In this way, the comprehension of the history related to those objects becomes open to present and future investigations, rather than closed to a sole line of analytical interpretation. It is the full consideration of those dynamics that allows the advancement of our understanding of the past.

What we are revealing is that the signs left by those dynamics are more complex than they appear at first sight.

This analysis allows us to reconsider the history of the three Catholic wives of the despots and aspects related to these figures neglected by the large-scale historical surveys, and to provide a more significant narration. In a sense this research offers the opportunity to look for traces left by people that are usually marginalized in the large historical discourse. In this dissertation we have shown that these people do leave tangible traces, which we have been able to collect and to document. We have provided the first systematic reading of these traces, which in aggregate give weight and depth to the historical figures to whom they relate.

If we knew that there was a monogram bearing the name of Isabelle de Lusignan, now we know that the monogram with her name is associated with an act of patronage, probably for the church of Hagios Demetrios, by presenting her as a ruling *basilissa*/queen. Similarly, sculptural elements from the church of the Peribleptos, when read in association with the iconographic repertoire of her family of origin, can be linked to the presence of Bartholomea Acciaiuoli in Mystras. The visual antiquarian taste expressed in the fresco decorations of the upper galleries of the Pantanassa, in conjunction with the gothicising sculptural details used to decorate

the apses of the same church, are all elements that complement the documentary evidence provided by the letters of Cleophe Malatesti to define her role at court.

This dissertation allows us to tie together with a thread all these elements, to give meaning to these evanescent figures. So in essence the history of these women appears more documented through the consideration of the visual culture of their time.

By revealing the complex cross-cultural references embedded in the many objects produced in the artistic workshops active in Mystras in the late period, this study ultimately demonstrates that these workshops were able to express features that were not just responses to Constantinopolitan models, but autonomous and innovative.

Thus, through the case study of Mystras, this dissertation enhances our understanding of the level of sophistication and the complexity of the artistic production of the last, but not ultimate, artistic phase of the Byzantine Empire.

Coming into being in the highly diversified province of the Byzantine Morea, during the final decades of the Empire of the *Romaioi*, this phase was animated by many individuals, local aristocrats and intellectuals, who were actively participating in the political and economic as well as intellectual and artistic discourses and trends that were developing in the Byzantine Morea as well as to its east and to its west.

The people of this land were culturally responsive to the main challenges and discussions of their time, and defined themselves within the cultural space nurtured by the diplomatic and trading routes crossing the Adriatic, the Ionian and the Aegean seas, linking – in the same, yet multifaceted landscape – the inhabitants of Mystras

and those of its neighbouring cities, of Constantinople, of the Ottoman Empire, of Italy and of Europe.

Appendix 01

Letter 1

5 October 1426 – Mystras

Cleophe wrote to her sister Paola Malatesti Gonzaga

Document: Archivio di Stato di Mantova [ASMn], *Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 128r-v

[as in Anna Falcioni, ‘Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane’, in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, edited by Anna Falcioni, II, p. 964, Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005]

[This transcription has been checked and corrected based on the reading of the actual document. Falcioni transcribed “Magistrati” instead of “Misistrati”]

[recto]

Illustis et potens domina honoranda soror carissima. Da poi che messer Antonio da Fossombrone, ambasiadore de nostro signore / se parti de qua, non si è innovato altro verso de mi. Vero è ch'io so stata e sto anco como io steva allora, / cum gravissime pene et cum poco contentamento. Et perché so che da esso misser Antonio seriti stata particolarmente / advisata de omni cosa. Non me extendo per mò, scriverive altro se non ch'io me recomando a la vostra signoria, / suplicandola che de mi habbia qualche pietà, et che se degne operare in quello gli è possibile per salute de / la mia anima; et pregovi me advisati spesso del vostro bon stato, del quale so molto dessiderosa / audire continuamente. Datum Misistrati, die quinta octobris 1426.
/ La vostra sorella Cleophe Paleologina

[verso]

Illustri et potenti domine honorande, / sorori mee carissime domine Paule de / [Gonçag]la Mantue etc.

Letter 2

22 January 1427 – Mantua

Paola Malatesti Gonzagna wrote to Pope Martin V

Document: ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2390, c. 37r

[as in Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane', in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, edited by Anna Falcioni, II, pp. 964-5, Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005]

[recto]

Sanctissime paternitati ac beatissime domine domine mihi singularissime.
Quanta retributione exspecte la Sanctità Vostra, apresso / le altre soe opere meritorie, de la pietosa subventionem facta a quella povera figliola et ancilla sua infelice mia sorella / fin al dì presente, solamente hèn noto a colui cui omnia sunt nuda et aperta, el quale satisfarà secondo la sua usada iusti/tia et misericordia in questo mondo et in altro Iesu Christo glorioso morì per questa anima et el Pastor Sancto a chi hèn comesso el gre/ge non la permecterà perire; che se la pegorsella sua se sentisse abandonada da lui, dove seria el so refugio in questo seculo / a chi deveria ricorrere, chi gle porgeria mano, non desisterà adunqua la signoria vostra da la sua opera incepta de la huma/nità de la qual confixa et astretta da ardua necessitè de quella poverecta, ho presunto scrivere a quelli, la quale hu/milmente prego se degne perdonare a la mia presuntione et a li piedi, de la qual recomando cum reverentia la pove/recta bisognosa cum el vecchio padre, la carità che ha mustrato, a questo ponto la signoria vostra oltre le altre obligatione religa in per/petuo loro et tucti nui altri soi a quella a li pedi de la prefata signoria vostra umelmente me recomando

/ Ex Mantua, die 22^a ianuarii.

/ Sanctitatis vestre.

/ Indigna filia et ancilla Paula de Gonzaga manu propria.

Letter 3

12 February 1427 – Pesaro

Battista da Montefeltro wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga

Document: ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, E.XXVII, 2, *Affari in Rimini*, busta 1081, n. 54.

[as in Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane', in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, edited by Anna Falcioni, II, pp. 965-6, Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005]

[recto]

Magnifica domina honoranda soror mea carissima. Ho ricevuda vostra lettera et vedendo quello che la signoria vostra me commanda, / ve aviso ch'el signor nostro Pandolfo et monsignor l'arcivescovo, per vedere se modo alchuno se possese mai tenere / circa l'aiuto de quella disaventurada nostra sorella, desideravano mò de sapere qualche cosa / de sua intention et per information de ciò, scripsero a ser Michele quale è a Patras, che andasse <a> / a visitarla et sforzasse de sentire de l'animo suo, quanto el posseva. Ser Michele è stato sempre infermo / et non gli è possudo andare. Vero è che Christofano è

venudo a Patras et a reportato lì ch'ella è / più perfida greca del mondo et in segno de ciò ch'ella disputa de la fè et ingegnasse de pervertire / l'agnolella. Mò, per le casion che vui savide, non pensamo ch'ella se fide de lui et che tucto questo / la facia simulatamente, et in segno de ciò gli mandò un gentilomo di Padoa, che se chiama Iacomo / de Sancto Agnolo <gli> che sta a Patras et parlogli in secreto, dolendose de quel ch'ella havea facto; / ella gli response: «Habitò non fa monaco, bench'eo sia stata unta con un poco d'olio, sia certo ch'eo son con lo core così franca como eo fui mai», et questo a tucti nui cie pare / più credibele. Ella in aparentia sta de bonna voglia, per tale modo ch'el marido non monstra / havere più suspecto de lei et omne homo gli pò liberamente parlare. El dispoto pare / che gli abia promesso habitare con lei sei anni et non più, et vive in observantia de sua / castità et astinentia, non mangiando mai carne. Et questo è quanto eo ne ho possudo sentir / da questi signori. Se per l'avenire ne haverimo cosa alchuna più chiara, eo vel notificarò. / El signor nostro padre ha havudo in gli dì passadi una gran doglia in la parte de redo / del capo; al presente è molto megliorado, per la gratia de Deo. Monsignore è in tucto / sença fevere, mò è molto debile. Recomando a vuii. Pensauri, .XII. februarii.

/ Vostra sorella Baptista.

[verso]

Magnifice domine honorande sorori / mee domine Paule de / Gonçaga Mantue etc.

Letter 4

26 January 1428 – Mystras

Cleophe Malatesti wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga

Document: ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 145r-v

[as in Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane', in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, edited by Anna Falcioni, II, p. 966, Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005]

[recto]

Illustrissima sorella mia. Da poi ch'el conte Riciardo se partì de qua, non ho intexo de quello mio illustre frade/llo e signore e della signoria vostra e de quilli mei dolci e chia ri figlioli. E pertanto piaciave avixarme del vostro bon / stado e de tutti li altri nostril; avixandove che nui tutti vestri simo sani con la gratia de Dio. Io non me stendo in / più scrivere, perché non ho tempo, ma se volite savere, scrivite a quello vostro reverendissimo frade/llo che ve n'avixe e save, sarite informata. Faxite pregare a Dio per l'anima mia, che del corpo non me ne / incuro. Altro per mò non scrivo. Dio ve dia bona vita. Data al Mistrà, a dì .XXVI. de zenaro. De quilli orfanitti / de quella nostra sorella poverella piaciave avixarmene, che Dio sa, se io fosse in altri paexe, ne toria qua/lche una.

/ La vostra sorella Cleofe Paleologhina.

[verso]

Illustri et excelse domine et sorori / nostre honorandissime domine Paule de Gonzaga Mantue etc.

Letter 5

20 March 1428 – Mystras

Cleophe Malatesti wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga

Document: ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 144r-v

[as in Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane', in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, edited by Anna Falcioni, II, pp. 966-7, Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005]

[recto]

Illustra madona et sorella mia. L'è più tempo che non ho udità novelle delle parte del là, ciohè, de quello nostro magnifico / et excelso patre et signore, né de quelli nostri fradelli, né sorelle, né anche della illustra signoria vostra et de quello / mio illustre signore e fradello, della quale cosa ne so in grande pensiero. He pertanto ve prego che ve piaccia farmene / avixata, che posite ben pensare quanta consolatione io ho, quando io sente che stiatu tutti bene; et pertanto ve prego non / siati scharsi in lo scrivere, ma sempre va ricordati de mie forestiera da vederme con vostre lettere, poichè oghie / ce siamo deslongati l'una da l'altra, avixandove che nui de qua simo sani infino adesso, e la caxone che non ho scritto / più tempo, si è che ce pensavamo da hora in hora mandare uno messo del là e cusì a la prexente mandamo el dicto prexen/te aportadore e nostro inbasadore el venerabile diacono, soi nome Megha Cartofila ch'è hoficiale de Chiexa, / el quale mandamo al nostro signore el papa, e anche dal nostro padre et signore. Et pertanto prego la illustra signoria vostra / che me siati acontorio in quello che domando per como quella sorella che io so che site tenera a tutta la vostra saguinità / e a mie forestiera che doviati considerare che, sença questa grazia che io domando, io non seria malcontenta e la mia vita se/ria curta e amara, e volesse pure Dio che la vita solamente avesse la pena che çò che porta, per la mia vita / non me pariria niente, ma saria danata l'anima mia in perpetua. Io me destenderia in lo scrivere et seriamme / asà utile desfogare l'animo mio che asà pieno de tosecho e d'amaritudine, ma l'ora non m'el dà, e anche le / lagreme non me lassa e li schiopi del pianto; ma ne serite informata da quello nostro magnifico et excelso patre et / signore de parte, ma de tutto non seria carta che la tenesse. E no ve daxite inpaço troppo pene per mie, sorella mia / dolci, che le pene porta pericholo, e inanci voria essere morta, che per mie seguisse alcuno male, né pericholo / da quilli mei dolci figlioli evenuti, sì de

li figlioli della signoria vostra e anche de quilli horfanelli de quella benedetta / anima de nostra sorella e anche de Lixabetta nostra figliola e nevote non ho scritto de sovra, che Dio sa, / che non so bene in mie, sì che piaciave averme per scuxata, che tanto le mei pene, che me desmendecho mie / medexima, faximene avixata de tutti, se li stanno bene, con la gratia de Dio e se ne avite fatto de l'altri che non / li sapia, perché ne sosi consolata da loro bene como da questa che parturie, piaciave fare la scuxa a quello / mio illustre fradello e signore, perché voglio scritto, perch'el serà avixato da la signoria vostra. Data la Mixitra, a die .XX. de marzo.

/ La vostra sorella Cleofe Paleologhina, Dio gratia, vasilisa della Morea.

[verso]

Illustri et excellentissime domine et sorori / nostre charissime domine Paule de Gonçagha, / Mantue etc.

Letter 6

18 July 1428 – Mystras

Cleophe Malatesti wrote to Paola Malatesti Gonzaga

Document: ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, F. II/8, *Mantova e Paesi*, b. 2391, c. 146r-v

[as in Anna Falcioni, 'Cleofe Malatesti nelle fonti epistolari mantovane', in *Le Donne di casa Malatesti*, edited by Anna Falcioni, II, pp. 967-8, Rimini: B. Ghigi, 2005]

[recto]

Illustra sorella mia. Poiché io so quanto amore avuto la signoria vostra a mi, vostra sagurata sorella, pertanto ho pregato a misser / Antonio che ghe piaccia venirve a vixitare e ad informarve de tute le mei pene, sì che penso che / lui virà dalla signoria vostra e pertanto no me stendo in più scrivere. Arecomandome a la signoria vostra e a le vostre horacione; / e piacive rechomandare misser Antonio al signore nostro padre, perché certo s'è molto adoverato per mie. Data / al Mistrà, a dì .XVIII. de luio.

/ La vostra sorella pocho aventurata Cleofe Paleologhina.

[verso]

[Illustri] et potenti honorande sorori mee / Paule de Gonzagha, Mantue etc.

Appendix 02

Fortress

Construction of the fortress was started in 1249 by William II of Villehardouin (died 1278), prince of Achaea (Fig. 307 – Fig. 309). The small defensive complexes are organized into a lower and a higher enclosure. Within the higher enclosure are the remains of two chapels, living quarters with a cistern and a bastion overlooking the valley. In the lower section there are several small and unidentified buildings, a cistern, a bastion, and a gate building.¹ The first construction phase was Frankish, which was interrupted when William II was captured by the Byzantines and gave the fortress as ransom. After that, the fortress was Byzantine until 1460, but the second construction phase only occurs with the Turks, who occupied the site between 1460 and 1686, when the Venetians conquered it.² In 1714 the Turks took it back. The fortress was excavated, consolidated and restored between 1990 and 1995.³

Hagios Demetrios

The metropolitan church of Lakedaimonia, also known as the Metropolis, is of uncertain foundation, though we know that the transfer of the bishopric of Lakedaimonia from near Sparta to Mystras took place around 1262.⁴ The first

¹ On the fortress of Mystras, see Leake, *Travels in the Morea. With a Map and Plans*, vol. I pp. 127-8; Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pl. 6 nn. 10-13, pl. 7 nn. 1-3; Andrews, *Castles of the Morea*, 159-82; Stefan Sinos, 'Mistras', in *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, vol. VI, 1999, 380–518, coll. 381-2, 399-401, 404-5, 454-7; Μαρίνου, 'Το φράγκικο κάστρο της κορυφής'.

² During the Venetian domination, the fortress was surveyed by Venetians. A plan of this survey from ca. 1700, is in the Archivio Grimani of the Biblioteca Marciana, Venezia. A reproduction of the map can be found in Μαρίνου, 'Το φράγκικο κάστρο της κορυφής', p. 80 fig. 3.

³ Μαρίνου, p. 86.

⁴ For a general introduction to the architecture of the church of Hagios Demetrios, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce*

attested development phase can be linked to the first bishop of Lakedaimonia residing in Mystras, Eugenios, between 1262 and 1272. His successor Theodosios (1272 – ca. 1283) continued work on the church. Bishop Nikephoros Moschopoulos, bishop of Lakedaimon, ca. 1289 (died 1322 - 1332), restructured the church. The restoration of the Metropolis is attested by a stone inscription dated 1291-1292 (Fig. 211).⁵ A last construction phase corresponds to the addition of the galleries, which scholarly literature attributes to Bishop Matthaïos around 1449 and associates with the coronation of the Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos (Table 2). Both the attribution and the dating have been questioned in recent literature.⁶ The church is on two levels: a ground floor and a gallery (Table 22 – Table 24). On the ground level there is a basilica of central naves and side aisles terminating in apses, a narthex and an exonarthex to the west, and a portico along the north façade. On the upper level, a cross-in-square plan is covered by a central dome and four domes on the corners. On the northwest corner above the exonarthex is a small chamber (Table 24 Fig. 10). On the southeast corner, the church has a bell tower (Table 24 Fig. 11). The connection between the lower and upper level is through a staircase on the south exterior of the church (Table 24 Fig. 10). Inside the church are *spolia* including column shafts, capitals, marble slabs (Fig. 70 – Fig. 72, Fig. 212 – Fig. 215). Of particular interest for this research are two carved stone blocks part of the same architectural element, an architrave with a monogram – now in the Museum of the city – and a stone slab

aux XIVe et XVe siècles, pls. 16 n. 1, 17-20 n. 1; Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine* pp. 8, 20 n. 3, 31, 34, 35, 36, 41, 44, 53, 95, 95 n. 1, 124 n. 2, 125, 136, 174, 175, 176, 198, 198 n. 3, 200, 206 n. 6, 212, 212 n. 1, 234, 238, 240, 241, 251, 280, 280 n. 1, 286 n. 1, 297; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pp. 5-8; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 25-9; Sinos, 'Mistras', coll. 416-22; Μαρίνου, *Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά*; Γεωργία Μαρίνου, 'Άγιος Δημήτριος, η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά', in *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά. Το Έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Ταμείο Διαχείρισης Πιστώσεων για την Εκτέλεση Αρχαιολογικών Έργων, 2009), 115–35, pp. 115-35.

⁵ For the inscription see Millet, 'Inscriptions byzantines de Mistra (Pl. XIV-XXIII)', 122. For a study of the inscription see Μανούσακας, 'Η χρονολογία της κτιτορικής επιγραφής του Αγίου Δημητρίου του Μυστρά', 70–79.

⁶ Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', pp. 288-92.

with the carving of a rampant lion (Fig. 73). The church is part of a larger complex. The entire complex is enclosed by a wall. On the north side of the church there is the post-Byzantine residence of the bishop and a courtyard. The complex was modified during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷ The most recent restorations were undertaken from the eighties of the twentieth century to 2005.⁸

The decorative programme of the Metropolis (Table 22-Table 24)⁹ comprises, in the central nave, the Virgin and child in the conch of the apse, the scene of the Annunciation on the side of the apsidal conch, the scenes of the Life of Christ in the upper section of the south and west walls, and military and other saints on the lower register of the west wall.¹⁰ In the north aisle, we find the bust of Hagios Demetrios in the apsidal conch. Above the apsidal conch, the narrative cycle of the *life* of Hagios Demetrios begins. The cycle develops in the east end of the vault of the north aisles (Fig. 218-Fig. 221). In the west end of the same aisles are scenes of the miracles of Christ. On the north wall of the north aisle, just below the two cycles are medallions of saints and martyrs. Below these are other portraits of saints and martyrs and, below those, a strip with full-length portraits of saints and military saints.¹¹ In the south aisle, is an icon of the merciful Christ in the conch of the apse. Above that, is an icon of Christ the Judge. Scenes of the life of the Virgin, such as the Birth of the

⁷ Μαρίνου, *Άγιος Δημήτριος. Η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά*, p. 251.

⁸ Μαρίνου, 'Άγιος Δημήτριος, η μητρόπολη του Μυστρά', 131–35.

⁹ For a general introduction to the interior fresco decoration of the Hagios Demetrios, Metropolis, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 64-87; Gabriel Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe, et XVIe siècles: d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, 2. éd., Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome ; fasc. 109 (Paris: EDe Boccard, 1960), XXXVIII, XXXIX, XLI, L, LXIII, 31, 38, 47, 55, 62, 63, 65, 75, 75 n. 13, 88, 93, 146, 158, 162, 163, 185, 279, 294 n. 5, 295, 297, 308, 340, 342, 344, 585, 589, 632, 634, 645, 671, 673-6, 677, 689; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pp. 21-2, 24-32, 33 n. 273, 34-40, 53-61, 63-4, 64 n. 110, 67, 67 n. 137; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 35-45; Sinos, 'Mistras', coll. 416-22.

¹⁰ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pls. 5, 6 schéma IV.

¹¹ Dufrenne, pls. 8, schémas V c-d.

Virgin, are found in the east end of the vault (Fig. 20), while scenes of the miracles of Christ are found in the west end (Table 23, Table 24 Fig. 13 – Table 24 Fig 15). On the south wall of the south aisle, below the scenes of the life of the Virgin and of the miracles of Christ, are full-length portraits of saints.¹² The galleries of the Metropolis are not decorated.

Hagioi Theodoroi

The church is located within the precinct of the Brontocheion (Fig. 2), one of the most important monasteries in the Morea, situated in the northern part of the lower city.¹³ Originally the church served as the *katholikon* of the monastery, but was subsequently replaced by the church of the Hodegetria. It was finished around 1296 by Abbot Pachomios,¹⁴ *grand protosynkellos* of the Peloponnese before 1309 (died after 1322).¹⁵ The church is a Greek cross octagon plan, with west bays delimited by two columns and an east apsidal section, with a *diakonikon*, *prothesis*, and a *bema*.

¹² Dufrenne, pls. 7, schémas Va,b.

¹³ For a general introduction to the architecture of the church of Hagioi Theodoroi, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 20, 21; Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, pp. 8, 117, 119, 124, 125, 139, 165, 174, 198, 212, 213, 234, 238, 245, 246, 280, 280 nn. 1-2, 281, 283, 297; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, p. 8; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 47-50; Sinos, 'Mistras', coll. 422-34; Σίνοϋ, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Committee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, pp. 136-41.

¹⁴ 'In the bibliographical note in codex Paris. Gr. 708, which contains homilies by St John Chrysostom and was copied by Basilakes Nomikos in 1296, Pachomios is mentioned as Abbot of the Sts Theodore Monastery and the owner of the manuscript, while in a epigram in the same codex he is mentioned as the ktitor of the church', in Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', p. 282 n. 16. See also Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras', p. 373 n. 13. Also Pachomios, see above page 68 footnote n. 52.

¹⁵ For *synkellos*, see 'Synkellos - Oxford Reference', accessed 29 June 2015, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-5251..> See also Gerstel, 'Mapping the Boundaries of Church and Village. Ecclesiastical and Rural Landscape in the Late Byzantine Peloponnese', pp. 348-52. As a term of comparison of the conflict between an abbot and a bishop see Günter Prinzing, 'Abbot or Bishop? The Conflict about the Spiritual Obedience of the Vlach Peasants in the Region of Bothrotos ca. 1220: Case No. 80 of the Legal Works of Demetrios Chomatenos Reconsidered', in *Church and Society in Late Byzantium*, ed. Dimiter Angelov (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2009), 25-42.

On the north and south sides of the central nave there are two vaulted arms (Table 37, Table 38). To the west there is a narthex. There are four chapels at the four corners of the church. The dissertation particularly considers the two funerary chapels on the southeast and northeast sides (Fig. 120-Fig. 123, Table 39 – Table 41). The last restoration of the church took place between 1984 and 2005.¹⁶

The decorative programme of Hagioi Theodoroi is very deteriorated.¹⁷ In the east section we can recognize the Annunciation scene in the upper portion of the pillar separating the prothesis from the bema. On the upper portion of the wall of the north arm we can see a scene that has been identified as the Pentecost, but rendered originally in comparison with the conventional iconography of the scene (Fig. 115 – Fig. 117, Table 42 Fig 86). Below it there is the full-length representation of military saints.¹⁸ In the west section we can identify scenes of the *Life* of the Theotokos and the Descent of the Holy Ghost on the upper portion of the walls. On the lower portion of the walls are military saints.¹⁹ In the northeast chamber is a funerary portrait of Manuel Palaiologos kneeling in front of the Theotokos (Fig. 139– Fig. 140, Table 41, Table 42 Fig. 85B1).²⁰ In the southeast chamber is the Zoodochos Pege in the conch of the apse, scenes of the *Life* of Christ, the Koimesis, and a portrait of a man standing in front of Saint John the Baptist, with an Archangel

¹⁶ Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, pp. 139-41.

¹⁷ For a general introduction to the interior fresco decoration of the Hagioi Theodoroi see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 88-91; Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe, et XVIe siècles*, pp. LI, LVII, LX, 33, 48, 314, 360, 501, 503, 509, 513 n. 3, 516, 552; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pp. 13, 21, 23, 29-31, 37, 41, 44-5, 57-8, 60, 67; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 50-1; Sinos, 'Mistras', coll. 422-4.

¹⁸ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pl. 2 schéma Ib.

¹⁹ Dufrenne, pl. 2 schéma Ib.

²⁰ Dufrenne, pl. 1 schéma Ia n.8.

behind him (Fig. 120, Fig. 122-Fig. 127, Table 11 – Table 12, Table 39).²¹ For this dissertation we will focus on the funerary portraits in the southeast and northeast chapels, and of the fresco that is interpreted as the Descent of the Holy Ghost in the upper portion of the wall of the north arm.

Theotokos Hodegetria

Abbot Pachomios started construction of the church of the Theotokos Hodegetria, also known as Aphentiko, around 1310. It became the new *katholikon* of the Brontocheion monastery, replacing Hagioi Theodoroi. It is a church on two levels (Table 30 – Table 32).²² The ground floor is a basilica with a central nave flanked by narrow side aisles. To the west is a narthex and the traces of an exonarthex. On the north and south side there were porticos. On the upper level, the church has a cross-in-square plan. This is the first of the churches in Mystras to feature this design solution, known in modern literature as the *Mistratypus*. A characteristic of the *Mistratypus* is that the narthex also is on two levels (Table 30 Fig. 43, Table 32 Fig. 48, Table 32 Fig. 49). On the north and south sides of the narthex there are two rooms. The north one spans both levels and is a funerary chapel (Fig. 129). The south one instead has two levels connected by stairs, which are the only passage between

²¹ Dufrenne, pl. 3 schéma II.

²² For a general introduction to the architecture of the church of Theotokos Hodegetria, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 23-7; Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, pp. 8, 95, 96, 98, 102, 104, 125, 126, 128, 132, 135, 138, 139, 175, 176, 179, 187, 196, 198, 212, 239, 240, 247, 251, 281, 282, 297, 234, 246. Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, p. 8-10; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 53-6; Sinos, 'Mistras', coll. 424-30; Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Committee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, pp. 141-51. A controversial study of the construction phases of the church has been presented in Αναστάσιος Τάντσης, 'Παλαιολόγοι και Καντακουζηνοί ως χορηγοί εκκλησιαστικών ιδρυμάτων στο Μυστρά', *Βυζαντικά* 32 (2015): 257-90. Tantsis analysis of the construction phases of the church, with a post-dating of the transformation of the church with a terminus post quem to 1382, has been disputed in Kappas, 'Approaching Monemvasia and Mystras from the Outside: The View from Kastania', esp. n. 105 p. 176.

the ground floor and the upper level of the church. On the west façade there is also a bell tower. In the northeast and southeast corners there are chapels unconnected to the interior of the church. The church underwent two main construction phases that were studied by Hallensleben, who believed they were consecutive between 1310 and 1322 and ascribable to Pachomios.²³ A third construction phase is associated with Abbot Kyprianos, who was *protosynkellos* in 1366, and which entailed the construction of a chapel on the southeast corner of the south portico.²⁴ The south portico is now closed and converted into a chapel (Table 32 Fig. 51A-C).

Papamastorakes believes that the dating for the enclosing of the south portico and its decoration predates by four decades the construction of Kyprianos' chapel.²⁵ The church was restored in the eighties of the twentieth century.²⁶

The decorative programme in the central nave of the Hodegetria has been damaged and few frescoes are left (Table 31 Fig. 44A-C).²⁷ In the central nave we find the Enthroned Virgin and Child flanked by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the apsidal conch, the Ascension on the vault in front of the conch, and three scenes of the Feast Cycle: the Nativity, Baptism, and the Transfiguration of Christ (Fig. 187).²⁸

²³ Hallensleben, 'Untersuchungen zur Genesis und Typologie des "Mistratypus"'.
²⁴ See Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras', esp. p. 389.

²⁵ On Kyprianos see Papamastorakis, esp. pp. 389-91.

²⁶ Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, pp. 150-154.

²⁷ For a general introduction to the interior fresco decoration of the church of the Theotokos Hodegetria, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 92-103; Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe, et XVIe siècles*, pp. XLI, XLII, XLIII, XLV, XLVIII, LIX, 31, 38, 39, 93, 136, 142, 144, 145, 153, 154, 157, 161, 162, 169, 184, 212, 214, 215, 296, 297 n. 2, 421, 531, 536, 539, 552, 632, 651, 667, 671; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pp. 21, 23, 25-8, 30-1, 34, 36-7, 39-47, 57-61, 66; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 59-67; Ετζέογλου, *Ο ναός της Οδηγήτριας του Βροντοχίου στο Μυστρά. Οι τοιχογραφίες του νάρθηκα και η λειτουργική χρήση του χώρου*; Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras'.

²⁸ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pl. 10, schéma VII.

In the aisles are depictions of saints and martyrs.²⁹ In the lower narthex, on the arch above the entrance to the central nave, there is the Zoodochos Pege next to Angels between Anna and Joachim (Fig. 256). Scenes of the miracles and of the teachings of Christ are on the north vault of the lower narthex and on the north and south walls of the lower narthex.³⁰ In the gallery above the narthex, we find the Theotokos and Christ encircled by figures from the Old Testament and seraphim in the central dome, and the representation of the Seventy Apostles on the walls of the gallery.³¹ Also in the galleries there are figures from the Old Testament, patriarchs, bishops, on the walls. On the east vault of central part of the south gallery, we find the Baptism of Christ, while on the west vault of the same is the Transfiguration of Christ.³² On the dome of the northwest chapel, we find Christ Pantokrator encircled by seraphim, while on the walls we find groups of saints, martyrs, ascetics, prophets, patriarchs, bishops, and in the apse we find Christ as Judge. In the chapel we also find funerary portraits of Theodore I Palaiologos and Abbot Pachomios (Fig. 129, Table 32 Fig. 50).³³ In the south portico, we find depictions of the history of Zacharias, the Nativity, the Massacre of the Innocents, scenes of the latter part of the life of the Theotokos, the Dormition cycle, prophets, and funerary portraits.³⁴ The southeast chapel shows depictions of the Theotokos and Christ, the Last Supper, bishops, Saint Nikon Metanoieite, monks, Saint Basil, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, and other saints.³⁵

²⁹ Dufrenne, pls. 11,12, schémas VIIIa-d.

³⁰ Dufrenne, pl. 13, schéma IX.

³¹ Dufrenne, pl. 14, schéma Xa.

³² Dufrenne, pls. 15,16, schémas Xb-e.

³³ Dufrenne, pl. 17, schéma XI.

³⁴ Dufrenne, pl. 18, schéma XII. For the frescoes of the south portico and for a recent study on the Dormition cycle, see Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras'.

³⁵ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pl. 19, schéma XIII.

Aside from the two churches, the monastery also preserves the remains of a refectory, kitchen, and storerooms. The complex is attached to the defensive walls and the aqueduct of Mystras.

Theotokos Peribleptos

The *katholikon* of the Peribleptos monastery, located in the southeast corner of the lower city, was built in the second half of the fourteenth century.³⁶ In the literature the church has been associated with Manuel Kantakouzenos and Isabelle de Lusignan.³⁷ The church has a cross-in-square plan with three apses (Table 25, Table 26). The dome is supported by two columns and piers. Unusually, it has a narthex on the south side and a chapel connected to the church on the west side (Table 25 Fig. 19, Table 25 Fig. 20). On the east side the church has two communicating chapels, one dedicated to St. Panteleimon and the other to St. Paraskeve. Within the church are many stone-sculpted materials. Remains of the monastery include a tower and an enclosure wall. Aspasia Louve-Kize recognizes three construction phases, the first between 1360 and 1370, the second between 1380 and 1382, and the third around 1714.³⁸

From the point of view of the decorative programme, the Peribleptos is amongst the better preserved in Mystras, and has the principal cycles that decorate most churches

³⁶ For a general introduction to the architecture of the church of the Theotokos Peribleptos, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 28-30; Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, pp. 8, 55 n. 1, 58, 92, 119, 174, 196, 212, 213, 234, 238, 280, 280 nn. 1-2, 242, 283, 234, 283. Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, p. 13-8; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 73-5; Sinos, 'Mistras', coll. 433-41; Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά'; Γεωργία Μαρίνου, 'Μονή Περιβλέπτου', in *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά* (Αθήνα: Ταμείο Διαχείρισης Πιστώσεων για την Εκτέλεση Αρχαιολογικών Έργων, 2009), 175-88.

³⁷ Λούβη-Κίζη, 'Οι κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά'.

³⁸ See Λούβη-Κίζη, esp. pp. 101-4 and εικ. 2 p. 103.

of the late period (Table 25-Table 29).³⁹ On the lower register of the walls of the church we find ascetics, bishops, military saints and stylite saints. The portrait of the two donors of the church is given a central position in the lower register on the west side (Fig. 26 – Fig. 33, Table 29 Fig. 35, Table 29 Fig. 36), just opposite the depiction of the Theotokos Enthroned on the conch of the sanctuary apse. On the main vaults of the church we find scenes of the lives of Christ and of the infancy and childhood of the Theotokos (Table 26).⁴⁰ The decoration also shows detailed fresco renditions of *opus sectile* and glass and metal elements (Fig. 205 – Fig. 210). This dissertation focuses in particular on the double portrait of the donors and on a series of carved marble pieces found inside and outside the church (Fig. 34 – Fig. 37, Fig. 56, Fig. 57, Fig. 286, Table 28).

Theotokos Pantanassa

The *katholikon* of the Theotokos Pantanassa monastery stands just below the upper city in close proximity to the Monembasia gate (Fig. 2).⁴¹ It was built by Ioannes Phrangopoulos, *protostrator* and *katholikos mesazon* of the despot of Morea between 1428 and 1443 (Fig. 233). In the literature the construction is given as starting in 1428 based on a now lost inscription, known from a transcription of Abbot Michel

³⁹ For a general introduction to the interior fresco decoration of the church of the Theotokos Peribleptos, see Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, pls. 108-131; Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe, et XVIe siècles*, pp. 24, 33, 50, 79, 93, 99, 104, 106, 114, 124, 134, 136, 184, 209, 211, 212, 216, 224, 227, 228, 229, 230 n. 9, 243, 243 n. 5, 246, 246 (fig 228), 247, 255, 258, 266, 277, 278, 279, 281, 296, 297, 300, 308, 359, 373, 393, 407, 452, 457, 458, 460, 465, 465 nn. 3, 5, 466, 475, 477, 496 n. 7, 515, 536, 634, 649, 650 n. 6, 668, 676-683, 690; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pp. 21-3, 25-33, 35, 37-8, 47, 50, 52-8, 61, 63, 67, 69; Chatzedakes, *Mystras*, pp. 77-89.

⁴⁰ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pls. 29,30, schémas XVIIIa,b.

⁴¹ For a recent introduction to and a survey of the secondary literature on the church of the Theotokos Pantanassa, see Ασπρά-Βαρδαβάκη and Εμμανουήλ, *Η Μονή της Παντάνασσας στον Μυστρά: Οι τοιχογραφίες του 15ου αιώνα; Σίνος, Η αρχιτεκτονική του καθολικού της Μονής της Παντάνασσας του Μυστρά*.

Fourmont (born 1690, died 1746) (Fig. 289-Fig. 291). However that dating is problematic.⁴² The church is built on an incline and is on two levels, with a basilica plan with a central nave and side aisles (Table 33 – Table 35). On the west there is a narthex and in front of the narthex are fragments of a portico. On the north there is a portico and, because of the incline, below it there is a chapel. On the upper level, the church has a cross-in-square plan. The stairway that connects the two levels is outside, on the south side of the church. It has a bell tower built on the northwest corner (Table 33). The exterior of the apses are decorated with stonework (Fig. 293 – Fig. 294).

The decorative programme of the central nave of the Pantanassa includes the Theotokos and Christ between Archangels in the conch of the apse (Plate 35). Below the conch we see the portraits of Joachim and Anne, accompanied by angels. On the vault immediately in front of the conch we find the Ascension (Plate 34), while on the vaults that cover the cross-in-square of the upper level we find the scenes from the Feast Cycle, including the Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation of Christ at Temple, Baptism of Christ, Resurrection of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem and Anastasis (Fig. 186 – Fig. 193).⁴³ In the lower part of the narthex, on the north wall, is the funerary portrait of Manuel Laskaris, likely over his tomb (Fig. 8).⁴⁴ In the gallery above the narthex, the Theotokos is surrounded by seraphim and prophets in the central dome, while on the walls saints are painted.⁴⁵ On the walls of the north and south upper galleries, we find figures from the Old Testament, prophets, patriarchs, and the Seventy Apostles (Table 34). The vault covering the central bay

⁴² Papamastorakis, 'Myzithras of the Byzantines / Mistra to Byzantinists', esp. 292-6.

⁴³ Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, pls. 21,22, schémas XIVa,b.

⁴⁴ Dufrenne, pl. 25, schéma XVI n. 76.

⁴⁵ Dufrenne, pl.26, schéma XVIIa.

of the north gallery shows the Resurrection of Lazarus to the east and the Transfiguration of Christ to the west (Fig. 237). The vault covering the central bay of the south gallery shows the scenes of the Annunciation to the east and the Nativity to the west (Fig. 300-Fig. 238). The upper register of the wall of the central bay shows the Journey to Bethlehem (Fig. 300).⁴⁶ This dissertation focuses in particular on the Ascension, the Annunciation (Fig. 238), the Nativity (Fig. 236).

Hagia Sophia

The palace church, Hagia Sophia, is attributable to Despot Manuel Kantakouzenos, so has post quem terminus of 1349 (Table 43, Table 44). The church has a cross-in-square plan, with two columns which organize the internal space and has a narthex, covered by a dome, and auxiliary chapels. It functioned as royal chapel and later it became the *katholikon* of a monastery. There is a portico both on west and north side, where we find a small tower. The capitals that decorate the imposts of the south and north pilasters of the west wall show the monogram of Manuel Kantakouzenos as *ktetor*.⁴⁷

The internal fresco decoration shows a similar organization to that of the Peribleptos. There is a large representation of a Christ enthroned in the apsidal conch, above which is a scene of the Ascension. On the apse is present a representation of the communion of the Apostles. The northeast chapel has a frescoed programme linked to the Theotokos. In the dome, the Virgin is represented, surrounded by the divine liturgy. On the west wall is present a representation of the Birth of the Virgin, while

⁴⁶ Dufrenne, pls. 27,28, schémas XVII b-e.

⁴⁷ Dufrenne, esp. 13-18; Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, esp. 155-64.

on the east wall is represented the presentation of the Virgin. This study considers the depiction of the Birth of the Virgin in frescoed decoration of the northeast chapel (Fig. 21, Table 45).⁴⁸

Aï-Giannaki

Aï-Giannaki is a small church dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, with a longitudinal nave divided from the three apses by a masonry templon (Table 46). The church has two accessing doors, on the north and south side, and it is now covered by a barrel vault that has been reconstructed in 1952. On the west side an ossuary is attached to the church, and a tomb is located in front of the north entrance.⁴⁹ The interior frescoed decoration dates to the third quarter of the fourteenth century, according a comparative formal analysis with the frescoes of Peribleptos and the south portico of the Hodegetria conducted by Nikolaos Drandakes (Table 46 Fig. 100, Table 46 Fig. 101).⁵⁰ This dating of the frescoes has been recently challenged by Titos Papamastorakis: he suggests a dating of the frescoes to the end of the first quarter of the fourteenth century.⁵¹

Evangelistria

The church of the Evangelistria is located the lower section of the hill. It is a church that presents an architectural structure similar to Hagia Sophia and the Theotokos

⁴⁸ Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, 8, 55 n.1, 58 n.3, 125, 126, 130, 135, 138, 174, 234, 238, 239, 247, 280 n.2, 282; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, esp. 16-18, 21-22, 24-25, 27, 30-31, 35, 38, 44-46, 49-51, 57-58, 67.

⁴⁹ Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, 230-32.

⁵⁰ Δρανδάκης, 'Ο Ἁϊ-Γιαννάκης τοῦ Μυστρά'. Drandakes suggests this dating for the decoration of the church based on previous studies on its interiors, see Δρανδάκης, 82 nn. 117-21.

⁵¹ Papamastorakis, 'Reflections of Constantinople: The Iconographic Program of the South Portico of the Hodegetria Church, Mystras', 389.

Peribleptos (Table 47). The plan is cruciform, organized by two columns in the naos. From the two columns, arches originate, which attach to pillars and semi-pillars and organize the plan of the church. In the central part is a dome and the lateral aisles are vaulted in.⁵²

On the west side it presents a narthex, also vaulted on two levels. The narthex has two levels, the second accessible from stairs outside the church on the west side, both levels are covered by barrel vaults. On the south side of the church is a small building with a portico. On the west side, behind the narthex is another portico. The interior of the church presents sculpted capitals decorated with lace and foliage motifs, which inscribe birds and crosses. At the corners of the capitals are inlaid drop-shaped elements. The frame of the doorway on the iconostasis shows a saw-tooth motif. The interior fresco decoration is severely damaged. On the cupola is painted a Christ Pantokrator surrounded by angels. The pendentives of the cupola are decorated with the Evangelists. In the apsidal conch is a Virgin enthroned with archangels and the communion of the Apostles. Overall, the iconographic programme is similar to those of Hagia Sophia and the Theotokos Peribleptos. The representation of the Koimesis and the resurrection of Christ.⁵³

⁵² Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, esp. 13-18; Σίνος, *Τα Μνημεία του Μυστρά: Το έργο της Επιτροπής Αναστήλωσης Μνημείων Μυστρά - The Monuments of Mystras: The work of the Communittee for the Restoration of the Monuments of Mystras*, 189-95.

⁵³ Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine*, esp. 8, 55 n.1, 124 n.2, 125, 174, 196, 200, 206 n.6, 212, 234, 280 nn.1-2, 282; Dufrenne, *Les programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra*, esp. 16-17, 21, 23-25, 27-28, 30, 32-33, 35, 59.

Appendix 03

The visual materials of the April 2015 photographic survey are not included in this study. Following here there is a list of churches and sites visited during the survey arranged by day. When possible there are references to the entries on Drandakes survey of the Byzantine churches in the Lakonia and Mani, see Νικολαου Δρανδακης, “Σχεδιάσμα Καταλόγου Των Τοιχογραφημένων Βυζαντινών Και Μεταβυζαντινών Ναών Λακωνίας,” *Λακωνικαι Σπουδαι* XIII (1996): 167–236.

13/04/2015

Hagios Ioannis ton Boubalon – Mystras, Lakonia; Naos Koimeseos - Hagios Ioannis, Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 p 180 66]; Hagios Nicolaos - Amykles - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 72 p 180]; Profetes Elias - Amykles - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 70 p 180]; Gola Monastery - Ιερας Μονη Γολας - Lakonia.

14/04/2015

Kato Hagios Ioannis - Kelephina – Basaras - Lakonia; Hagios Demetrios - Kelephina Valley – Basaras - Lakonia; Palio Panagia - Kelephina Valley – Basaras - Lakonia.

15/04/2015

Hagios Ioannes Prodromos - Veria (Veroia) - Lakonia; Hagios Nicholas - Veria (Veroia) - Lakonia; Byzantine Medieval Tower - Palio Pyrgo - Lakonia.

17/04/2015

Zoodochos Pege - Mystras, valley - Lakonia; Hagios Demetrios - Krokees - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 186 - 102]; Panagia Koimesis - Krokees - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 186 - 103]; Hagios Athanasios - Krokees [Drandakes 1996 - p. 186 - 104]; Panagia Koimesis - Marathos (Kotrafe) – Mani.

18/4/2015

Agia Kyriaki - Marathos – Mani; Hagios Philippos - Marathos – Mani; Hagios Nikolaos – Mani; Panagia - Kokkala – Mani; Hagios Ioannis Potamitis - Kokkala – Mani; Agia Barbara - Flomoxorio – Mani; Hagioi Asomatoi - Flomoxorio – Mani.

19/04/2016

Taxiarchis - Glezou - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - p 222 - 376B]; Hagios Petros - Triantafylia – Mani; Hagios Georgios - Nikandri - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 223 - 378(B)]; Taxiarchis - Charouda - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 223 - 379 (B)]; Panagia Faneromeni - Frangoulia - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 223 - 383 (B)]; Hagioi Theodoroi - Tsopakas - [Drandakes 1996 - 224 -386 (B)]; Hagios Ioannis - Kouloumi – Mani; Hagioi Asomatoi - Kouloumi - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 225 - 390 (B)]; Agia Barbara - Erimos - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 226 - 396 (B)]; Hagios Georgios - Karyneia - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 228 - 406 (B)]; Hagios Georgios - Karyneia - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 228 - 406 (B)].

20/04/2015

Ag Sotiras - Kato Gardenitsa - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 228 - 407 (B)]; Hagioi Sergios and Bachos - Kita - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 229 - 412 (B)]; Panagia (?) -

Ano Boularioi - Mani; Hagios Stratigos - Ano Boularioi - Mani [Drandakes 1996 - 232 - 445 (B)]; Hagioi Ioannis - Ano Boularioi – Mani.

21/04/2015

Hagios Nikolaos – Magula; Taxiarchis, Laïna (Goritsa) - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 181 - 74(B)]; Hagios Georgios - Laïna (Goritsa) - Lakonia; Hagios Nikolaos – Kokkinorachi; Hagios Nikolaos Achragias (near Theologos) - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 173 - 25 (B)].

23/04/2015

Panagia in Chrysafitissa – Chrysafa - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 174 - 32(B)]; Hagios Ioannis Prodromos - Chrysafa - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 175 - 33(B)]; Hagios Georgios Loutsoremas (Chrysafa) - Lakonia; Hagios Ioannis in tou Tsiliotou - Lakonia; Profetes Elias - Amykles - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 180 - 70 (B)]; Hagios Theodoros – Amykles - Lakonia; Hagios Nikolaos – Amykles - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - p. 180 - 72(B)].

24/04/2015

Hagios Georgios - Longanikos - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - 168 - 1(B)]; Panagia Koimesis - Longanikos - Lakonia [Drandakes 1996 - 168 - 2(B)]; Hagios Demetrios – Longanikos - Lakonia.

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